

Northern Nationalisms, Arctic Mythologies, and the Weight of History



Selected Writings by Shelagh Grant

Compiled and introduced by
P. Whitney Lackenbauer

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Shelagh Grant (1938-2020)

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Her Excellency the Rt. Hon. Mary Simon delivering the keynote address at the *Northern Nationalisms, Arctic Mythologies, and the Weight of History* Conference at Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario, 22 October 2022.

Foreword

Her Excellency the Rt. Hon. Mary Simon¹

Let me begin with Shelagh's own words—her own vision—from the preface to her book *Sovereignty or Security?*

Canada's north provides an infinite challenge for historians who attempt to explain its mystique...In my own experience, historical research and associated travel stimulated an even deeper appreciation and concern for what most Canadians describe as 'our north.' While the related myth continues to have a powerful influence on public perception, only through broader knowledge and understanding of the past can we hope to improve on the present.

Shelagh was more than a historian. She was a visionary who understood that in order to look to a brighter future and in order to improve lives today, we need to have a good grasp of history.

But Shelagh was much more than that. She was a loving wife, mother and grandmother. And Shelagh was a dear friend.

Shelagh and I worked closely for years, particularly here at Trent University during my days as Chancellor.

But even before my days at Trent, we worked together on a series of lectures, which were eventually published. It was called *Inuit: One Future, One Arctic*, and Shelagh was kind enough to write the foreword.

I remember our trips together, alongside her husband, Jon, in Scotland, and, memorably, near my parents' camp at Pyramid Mountain on the George River, catching trout and salmon. Or spending hours in a rich blueberry patch just talking.

Her passion is what brings us all together today: the Arctic.

Shelagh was an exception, and exceptional—one of the first Canadians, and one of the first women, to learn, understand, and record important elements of

¹ Drawn from Governor General of Canada, "Trent University conference keynote address," 22 October 2022, <https://www.gg.ca/en/media/news/2022/trent-university-conference-keynote-address>.

Canada's Arctic history. Shelagh was influential in so many ways: she got people to pay attention to the Arctic; she gave Canadians a complete picture of how Canada has engaged in Northern development and with the people who live there; and she inspired experts and decision makers to put their ideas about the Arctic on the table.

She travelled extensively in the North and formed relationships with northern communities and Inuit. She was an advocate and ally who took to heart the adage "Nothing about us without us." Shelagh listened and recorded the stories Inuit have told through the ages, passed down from generation to generation. Our history, our truth. In this way, she helped us see the importance of the Arctic as more than just a vaguely defined region.

The Arctic, she understood, is a homeland. It's vital to Inuit culture, spirituality, and identity. As you know, her books—*Arctic Justice* and *Polar Imperative*, among others—are staples in post-secondary studies on the Arctic and northern peoples. Many, if not all, of you here today have studied her research and been inspired by her writing.

But as Whit and I travel and talk to kids at schools across the country, we have noticed a shared thirst for knowledge among educators and students, no matter how young. They yearn for knowledge about the Arctic and about Indigenous peoples—their stories, cultures and histories. This is reconciliation in action, something that Shelagh understood. Her actions throughout her life were consistent with reconciliation, and her writing has always led us in that direction. Education and reconciliation go hand in hand, after all. Neither can be achieved without the other. And educators have a vital role to play.

Educators, and by extension researchers and historians, have a unique relationship with reconciliation. They are responsible for teaching us the true history of our nation, including our neglectful treatment of Indigenous peoples. Educators help shape our minds and our stories, and what we know of Indigenous peoples past and present. When we talk about the Arctic, Shelagh did this better than most. Now that responsibility falls to you, ... [as] a new generation, a new type, of Arctic explorer, focussing on preserving the Arctic and promoting new opportunities in Canada's North.

I challenge all of us, in this room and across the country, to see the Arctic as Shelagh saw it. To see Canada through the eyes of the Arctic.

... The road ahead—the big shoes Shelagh left behind—is daunting. But we must forge ahead in promoting Arctic knowledge and its peoples. This is hard, but necessary work. And so rewarding.

Rather than deny the truth of Canada's history, including in the Arctic, we must be prepared to accept it and teach it.

Indigenous peoples are relying on you to meet this important moment in history. Continue to educate yourselves and others on Inuit and, more broadly, Indigenous and Arctic history. Listen to their stories. Embed reconciliation in your work.

There is a word in Inuktitut, my mother tongue: *ajuinnata*. It means to never give up, to keep going, no matter how difficult the cause may be.

Ajuinnata is a beautiful word, and it reminds me of Shelagh.

I remember her taking every step possible to ensure she had the complete story, from the people who were there. She faced barriers in language, terrain and even policy, yet at every turn she persevered. She was happy to travel in any condition, sleep anywhere and talk openly with everyone. I'm proud to say she was a great friend and one who made a difference.

Just as I started with Shelagh's words, I want to end with the same, to inspire us as leaders of Arctic knowledge:

Leadership is an attribute sought by so many, yet attained by far too few...The test of a true leader lies not in title or power, but in the ability to place the needs of others ahead of one's own—and to convince others to do the same.

Let's all continue Shelagh's legacy of leadership, education, reconciliation and Arctic pride.

Excerpts from a speech delivered at Trent University, 22 October 2022



Shelagh Grant on the land outside of Grise Fiord, Nunavut.

Introduction

P. Whitney Lackenbauer

*A journey through life inspired by
— a passion for writing and history
— a love of Canada and its northern wilderness
— and a deep appreciation for the Arctic and
the Inuit*

A sage mentor, a generous colleague, a friend, and a dedicated member of her community, Shelagh was an inspiration to so many of us. Her publications exemplify her passion for writing and history, her love of Canada and its northern wilderness, and her deep appreciation for the Arctic and Inuit. This collection is a tribute to her ranging interests, insatiable curiosity, and commitment to continuous dialogue and learning.

Born in Montreal in 1938, she was the only child of Hazel Idona and Donald Ian Adams—the latter a businessman who was involved in the early stages of selling computer systems during the “punch card” era. “As soon as she could walk, Shelagh Dawn Grant’s father taught her how to ski and paddle a canoe which evolved into a deep passion for the outdoors,” a tribute to her in *Canadian Geographic* recounted.¹ Shelagh moved to Toronto before spending her high school years in Burlington, Ontario. She went into nursing after her father passed away at age fifty-two, feeling obligated to follow his wish that she do so. She and Jon Grant married in 1960, and she worked in a private medical doctor’s office as a nurse and administrator until she had the first of her three children (Susan, Debbie, and David).

Her love of history drew her to Trent University after Jon joined Quaker Oats in Peterborough in 1974. Canadian Studies Professor Emeritus John Wadland (Trent University) recounted how Shelagh first wandered into his office in 1975 and asked if she could take his course. They enjoyed “a great big friendship since that time,” and he expressed his amazement at how someone with such a high level of humility eventually went on to be recognized with an honorary doctorate from Trent. The proximity of the university to their home meant that she could take a course or two and still be around the children while they were growing up. She often spoke of her mentors—Wadland, Bruce

Hodgins, and Owen Wilson—and their strong encouragement that she continue with her studies.

Following the completion of her undergraduate degree in History at Trent, Shelagh went on to complete her master's degree in the same discipline. With her children away at private school during the week, she was able to travel to Toronto to add courses in the International Affairs program at the University of Toronto. Her course papers confirm that she deeply immersed herself into the historiography on Canadian political and Northern history, offering judicious assessments with clear and compelling prose. For her M.A. thesis work, she plunged into the archives in Ottawa, Yellowknife, and Whitehorse, and interviewed former senior government officials. Her 426-page thesis on "Sovereignty, Stewardship and Security in the Evolution of Canadian Northern Policy, 1940-1950," supervised by Hodgins and defended in 1982, formed the basis for her first book. Although she started doctoral studies, she ultimately decided to focus her energies on research and writing rather than driving back and forth to Toronto. Senior academic advisors reassured her that, in effect, her M.A. thesis work had achieved as much as most scholars' efforts to produce doctoral dissertations.

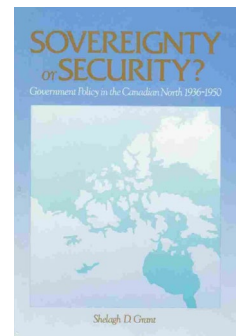
Shelagh often described her husband, Jon, as her best friend and fellow traveller. As avid canoeists, they paddled many of Canada's northern rivers. They also spent summers at their island retreat at Pointe au Baril on Georgian Bay, as well as extended periods in the winter at their log cabin on the Rivière du Diable at Tremblant in Quebec. Shelagh was active in volunteer activities as Director of Wildlife and Forest Issues with the Pointe au Baril Islanders' Association, as well as being a vice president and board member of Camp Wanapitei. She was also part of an advisory committee that was instrumental in establishing the Canadian Canoe Museum and bringing the late Kirk Wippen's Kanawa canoe collection to Peterborough in the 1980s. She and Jon continued to support the museum over the years, with Jon also serving on the museum's board of directors. In August 2022, the family honoured Shelagh's "love of the North, its land, peoples, rivers, and rapids" with a \$250,000 donation in her name towards a new museum being constructed beside Beavermead Park in Peterborough. "Shelagh's vision and committee work helped to guide The Canadian Canoe Museum in its early stages," Jon noted. This gift recognizes the canoe as a unifying legacy, from the First Peoples' travel to today's recreation, which is an important part of our rich and unique heritage."² She wrote about this theme in one of the articles in this volume.

Shelagh Grant's Writings: A Passion for Writing and History

As a scholar, Shelagh's first love was research and writing. "More than any other historian in the past two decades, [Shelagh Grant] has re-invigorated interest in the history of the Arctic through producing gripping narratives as well as powerful syntheses which connect the stories and the lives of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples who have shaped the history of Canada's north," her nominator for a D.Litt. from Trent University noted in 2014. The citation itself noted that "her books and dozens of academic articles have established her as one of North America's leading authorities on the history of the Canadian Arctic, sovereignty, and Inuit culture. Since the 1980s, she has been at the forefront of a renaissance of historical writing aimed at redirecting the eyes of Canadian policy-makers and citizens to the significance of our northern territories."³ As Governor General Mary Simon noted in the speech that serves as the foreword to this volume, "Shelagh was influential in so many ways: she got people to pay attention to the Arctic; she gave Canadians a complete picture of how Canada has engaged in Northern development and with the people who live there; and she inspired experts and decision makers to put their ideas about the Arctic on the table."

Grant wrote her first book, *Sovereignty or Security? Government Policy in the Canadian North* (University of British Columbia Press, 1989), "as a Canadian in the Cold War era of U.S. president Ronald Reagan, seen by many Canadians—and many Americans—as dangerously escalating Cold War tensions," explained Elizabeth (Betsy) Elliot-Meisel, an associate professor of history at Creighton University (and the inaugural Trent University Fulbright Research Chair in Canadian Studies in 2022). The monograph, which traced federal policies with respect to northern development and sovereignty from the interwar period to 1950, bore the imprint of the decade in which she wrote it. Political debates over Canada-U.S. free trade, continental defence, and Arctic sovereignty inspired a surge of nationalist outcry emphasizing the threat of American hegemony and continentalism. Her systematic research on political and diplomatic considerations of an earlier era served as a rallying cry to once again shake Canadian officials from a "laissez faire" mentality with respect to Canada's northern territories.

The book placed a distinct emphasis on how federal government policymakers perceived the North, and the politicians, government officials, and private actors who played the role of "northern nationalists" seeking to influence this policy. Grant's research yielded novel insights into how Ottawa attempted to assert and defend Canadian sovereignty in the North, particularly after the



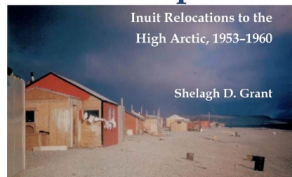
outbreak of the Second World War, when faced with growing American and British diplomatic and military pressures. Postwar continental defence questions again amplified American interest in the region, prompting Canada to reconsider its approach to northern administration, sovereignty, and security. “One leaves the book with a very solid understanding of how official Ottawa perceived the North, how that perception shifted through the war years, and how federal policy changed as a result of competing regional, national and international forces,” historian Ken Coates assessed. “At this level - and this was clearly Grant’s objective and priority - the book can only be judged a major success.”⁴ Political scientist Stéphane Roussel agreed, noting that Grant’s adoption of an implicit process-tracing framework allowed her to “identify a series of variables likely to influence the decision-making process (pressure of public opinion, international tension, etc.), to observe their interaction and to measure their respective influence.”⁵

Sovereignty or Security? had an immediate—and lasting—impact. While some reviewers critiqued what they saw as Grant’s “conspiratorial view of history” in terms of covetous American designs on the Canadian North,⁶ everyone celebrated the breadth and depth of her archival research in Canada, the United States, and Great Britain. Despite being mildly critical of her “failure to examine fully the relationship between stewardship and the sovereignty-security continuum” and her “presentist view” of northern administration, historian Robert Carney applauded it as “a work of major significance in clear and compelling terms. In providing a thorough and original interpretation of the issues of northern sovereignty and security, she has made a major contribution to northern and Canadian history and to policy studies in general. Her study not only serves as a primer in these areas, it also gives excellent background for other bilateral and multilateral questions presently facing the country.”⁷

In 1990, the Hon. David Crombie and Ron Doering were visiting Trent University and asked Shelagh if she would be interested in writing a paper for the Canadian Arctic Resources Committee (CARC) about the relocation of Inuit families to the High Arctic in 1953-1958. “Having published a book in 1988 on the subject of northern sovereignty issues arising during and following World War Two, I was intrigued and tentatively agreed pending a review of available information and accessibility of pertinent archival documents,” she noted. After months of archival research in Ottawa, she produced a report that issued a damning indictment of what she described as “a case of

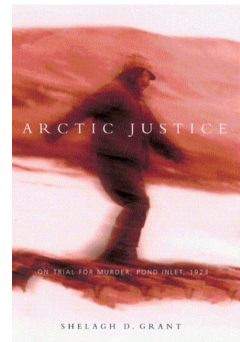


“Errors Exposed”



compounded error.” In this and a subsequent submission on the topic to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (both of which were reproduced, with supporting documentation, in a 2016 volume in the Documents on Canadian Arctic Sovereignty and Security series), she made a strenuous case for sovereignty as the primary motive for the High Arctic relocations. The relocations represented a deliberate attempt by officials in Ottawa to create the “illusion” of Canadian occupancy in the High Arctic, which, she asserted, they believed was necessary to protect Canadian sovereignty. Grant suggested that senior officials deliberately conspired to conceal their “real” sovereignty motives and therefore cast the relocations in humanitarian and economic terms. “On re-reading the text and the documents, I realize that I would write a much different paper now that the government has resolved the outstanding issues to the satisfaction of the relocated Inuit,” she noted in 2016.⁸ Nonetheless, her research and strong argumentation had played an instrumental role in building the political pressure that led to an official apology by the Government of Canada in 2010.

Over the next decade, Grant carried her exploration of northern politics, social justice, and sovereignty issues into a critical examination of colonial legal systems and the tensions between Inuit and Canadian forms of justice. Her extensive research for *Arctic Justice: On Trial for Murder, Pond Inlet, 1923* (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002) meant more systematic work in the archives as well as annual trips to Baffin Island to conduct oral history interviews. In this compelling book, Grant offered a richly textured narrative recounting and analyzing the killing of Robert Janes by Nuqallaq, an Inuk from North Baffin Island, in March 1920. Inuit custom authorized the pre-emptive killing of an aggressive person who threatened their society, but Canadian laws considered it an act of murder. Although there was no permanent Canadian law enforcement presence in the Eastern High Arctic at the time, the Royal North West Mounted Police sent an officer north to investigate. Grant reconstructed the political and strategic motivations (particularly the perceived need to assert sovereignty) behind Ottawa’s decision to intervene, with authorities ultimately putting Nuqallaq, Aatitaaq, and Ululijarnaat on trial for the murder of Janes. Nuqallaq was sentenced to ten years’ hard labour in Stony Mountain Penitentiary, but he contracted tuberculosis and returned to Pond Inlet eighteen months later, where he soon died. Combining Inuit oral histories with nuanced readings of archival records, Grant highlighted the conflicting values and cultures, providing novel insights into how Inuit responded to the murder and how they perceived the police investigation and the subsequent court proceedings.



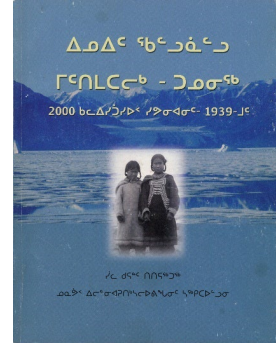
Reviewers noted the originality of Grant's approach and her masterful weaving together of oral interviews, diaries, and police and court records. "This is a fascinating story and a valuable contribution to the history of Northern Canada," Professor Bill Morrison of the University of Northern British Columbia celebrated. "Most significantly, because Grant has talked to the Inuit, this is the first time that the story of the relations between Inuit and newcomers has been told from the Inuit perspective."⁹ The Canadian Historical Association's citation for its Clio Prize for Northern History noted:

The strength of Grant's work lies in the detailed and carefully reconstructed narrative and the nicely-contextualized analysis of the murder, the police actions, and the handling of the case by Canadian legal and political authorities. Where the book clearly stands apart from most other works of northern history is in the author's extensive efforts to collect and use Inuit oral testimony in the reconstruction and explanation of the events and the cultural circumstances surrounding the killing and the subsequent trial. This is, in sum, a superb work of ethnohistory that capitalizes on the strengths of archival and oral documentation and shows a great deal of respect for both the canons of historical scholarship and the historical traditions of the Inuit of Baffin Island. *Arctic Justice* is well-illustrated, with useful and informative maps, reproductions of historical documents, and other well-chosen illustrative material. Shelagh Grant has written a masterful, compelling and insightful work, which fully deserves recognition as the winner of the Clio Award for Northern Canadian History.¹⁰

The mixed methods that Grant employed paid strong dividends, with her dramatic narrative providing critical insights into different Indigenous and Western concepts of social justice. "Like any play, paraded in front of critics, and even befuddled viewers, Grant's text leaves us holding the possibility of multiple scripts," sociologist Frank Tester noted. He also applauded her for doing "a fine job of cutting a line between a popular (and readable) text, and a scholarly work" that "is a worthy addition to the shelves of those of us still looking for new ways to read Arctic history."¹¹

While *Arctic Justice* furnished a social history of North Baffin Island in the twentieth century, Grant also wanted to ensure that her research was accessible to the Inuit with whom she had forged relationships in Pond Inlet and Pangnirtung. Accordingly, she once told me that her favourite book was actually the least known: *Mittimatalik-Pond Inlet: A History*, translated into Inuktitut and published by the Nunavut Department of Education for use in schools and Elders' centres. Primarily based on interviews with Elders that she conducted in

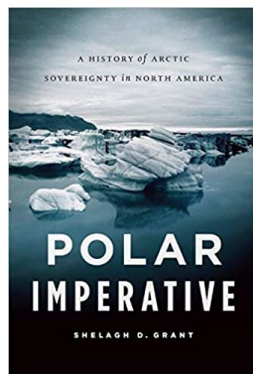
the Qikiqtani region, this book was her response to what she saw as distinctly different histories of the Arctic: one focusing on *qallunaat* experiences, the other on Inuit, in which Elders, following their oral tradition, passed down their history in the form of stories and songs. Shelagh's work sought to bridge this cross-cultural understanding. She wrote that "the best and most comprehensive history of the Inuit people may someday be written by an Inuk, who better understands the cultural nuances and emotional ties that link their present lives to the past. In the interim, academic historians must ask themselves whether they have a responsibility to help bridge the cultural divide by adding an Inuit voice to their writing." This she did. Her work reflected her deep commitment to Inuit oral history and her desire to make her work relevant to the people who shared their stories—and with whom she shared friendships. At a conference in honour of Shelagh hosted in October 2022, Inuit leader Rosemarie Kuptana noted how deeply she respected Shelagh's "efforts and her record of respectfully treating Inuit knowledge, expertise, and oral histories as real, and as relevant as anything non-Indigenous people might regard as knowledge or facts in archives or academia."



Grant's work also situated Canada's Arctic experiences in circumpolar contexts. With concerns about global warming and a so-called "race for resources" prompting a renaissance in scholarship about the Canadian Arctic and broader Circumpolar North in the early twenty-first century, she returned to her earlier work on competing Arctic sovereignty claims—and how these relate to ongoing and potential conflicts. She noted how many of the books and articles that appeared had focused on specific case studies, contemporary legal and political issues, or potential sovereignty challenges, with few providing essential historical background and context to understand evolving regional dynamics. Rather than perpetuating the "patchwork quilt" effect of recent literature, Grant set out to produce a comprehensive, multinational history of North American Arctic sovereignty—one that broadened her lens to include the United States and Greenland, and one that extended to the present.

Grant took a sweeping approach in *Polar Imperative: A History of Arctic Sovereignty in North America* (Douglas & McIntyre, 2010), with the narrative starting with the first known habitation of the region in around 3000 BCE. It was the culmination of more than three decades of research, grounded in archival materials that filled dozens of binders and a vast personal library of books. Tracing causes and effects over the *longue durée*, Grant discerned key events and circumstances that effected changes in authority or occupation in the region,

including new technologies, climate change, resources, and modes of governance. “A project of this scale would be a daunting proposition for any historian, but it is *Polar Imperative*’s very ambition that makes it such a significant contribution to scholarship,” historian Dawn Berry noted in a perceptive review. “For example, Grant’s broad interpretation of sovereignty allows her to trace the long-term impact of environmental, economic, and political factors and to tease out the trends and themes that would be otherwise imperceptible.”¹² Reviewers called it “eminently readable,”¹³ “expertly documented,”¹⁴ and “a ‘must read’ for every Canadian who is interested in the history of the Arctic.”¹⁵



Polar Imperative received tremendous critical acclaim and a deluge of honours. It won the Lionel Gelber Prize for the best English-language book on global affairs (the first time that a woman won the award), the J.W. Dafoe Book Prize for non-fiction that contributes to the understanding of Canada and its place in the world, and the Canadian Authors Association Lela Common Award for Canadian History. “Shelagh Grant’s riveting history of adventure, sovereignty, and environment around the Arctic Ocean is a comprehensive account of the interplay of politics, economics, institutions and culture that few ever experienced first-hand,” the chair of the Lionel Gelber Prize committee extolled.¹⁶ It also was listed as a finalist for both the Writers’ Trust of Canada’s Shaughnessy Cohen Prize for Political Writing, and the Canadian Historical Association’s Sir John A. Macdonald Prize for the best book on Canadian history. It is essential reading for anyone in the field of Northern Canadian history—and will remain so for generations.

Grant received many honours for her scholarship and service. In 1997, Shelagh was the recipient of the Northern Science Award—the first woman historian to be awarded this medal, which celebrates someone who has made a significant contribution to the knowledge and understanding of the Canadian North. In 2011, she was appointed a Fellow of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society and won that organization’s Erebus Medal four years later and its Capt. Joseph-Elzéar Bernier medal in 2017. She was awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012 for having made significant contributions to Canada. Two years later, Trent University awarded her an Honorary Doctor of Letters (D.Litt.) for her long-standing service to Trent University as an educator and her renowned achievements as a scholar of the Canadian Arctic. Affirming the latter contributions, Grant was one of ten inaugural recipients on 8 July 2015 of the Canadian Governor General’s new Polar Medal, created as part of the

Canadian Honours System to celebrate Canada's northern heritage and recognize people who render extraordinary services in the polar regions and who promote a greater understanding of Canada's northern communities and its people.¹⁷

Shelagh often emphasized how important it is that scholars writing about the North actually visit the places and peoples about which they are writing. "Canada is a vast, multicultural and multilingual country that cannot be studied solely through books, documents or multimedia formats," she wrote in March 2010. "Archival research is important, but so is the ability to visit the location of one's research, to talk to the people who live there and learn first-hand their views and experiences."¹⁸ Although conducting collaborative research with Northern Indigenous communities places "significant financial and time constraints on researchers," Ken Coates and William Morrison observe, Grant was one of the "the most successful scholars in this area," devoting "years and enormous personal resources to developing contacts and connections." While academic funding and career expectations "make it difficult for many scholars to make the commitment to this form of scholarship," Shelagh was an exemplar.¹⁹ She was an active member of the Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies (ACUNS), serving as Chair of its annual scholarship program (the Canadian Northern Studies Trust) dedicated to developing a cadre of scholars and scientists with northern experience while also enhancing educational opportunities for northern residents. Recognizing that, for many young scholars, the costs of Northern research can be prohibitive, the Grant family used the proceeds from the awards that Shelagh won for *Polar Imperative* to fund the Shelagh Grant Endowment in Canadian Studies at Trent University. The fund assists graduate students whose research requires long-distance travel or a professional, simultaneous translator for interviews or discussions in an Indigenous community.

Shelagh made "significant contributions to Trent University as a teacher, serving as an adjunct professor as well as a mentor to students interested in the history of Canada's north and its peoples," a Trent profile noted when she was presented with an honorary doctorate in 2014.²⁰ Her colleagues admired and respected her "not merely for her own academic work, but for her collegiality and for her generous guidance of young students who share her passionate love of Canada and the North."²¹ Even when Grant retired from regular teaching, she remained active as an adjunct professor in Trent's Canadian Studies Department and as a research associate of the Frost Centre for Canadian Studies and Indigenous Studies. In all of these roles, Shelagh embraced forms of knowledge that cut across disciplinary and cultural boundaries.

Shelagh Grant passed away on Saturday, 11 July 2020 from esophageal cancer. Her many contributions to scholarship and to the intellectual life of our

country, and her many friendships across Inuit Nunangat, ensure a lasting legacy with the many Canadians whom she touched and inspired with her passion, adventurous and generous spirit, and commitment to social justice. At a conference in memory of Shelagh Grant, convened with the same name as this book in October 2022,²² Trent University Provost Michael Khan recalled Shelagh's 2014 honorary degree address at Trent, when she said: "Paths are something one follows. Footprints are what we leave behind. Anyone can follow a path and leave footprints; but leaders are the trailblazers who create new pathways for others to follow." Khan described Shelagh as one of those trailblazers.

This collection of articles sheds light on the intellectual trail that Shelagh Grant blazed in Northern Canadian studies. "Shelagh was more than a historian," Governor General Mary Simon noted in her speech at the October 2022 conference. "She was a visionary who understood that in order to look to a brighter future and in order to improve lives today, we need to have a good grasp of history."

Section 1: Arctic Historiography, Mythology, and Symbolism

The first article on "The Canadian North: Trends in Recent Historiography," which Grant published with Trent Canadian Studies professor Bruce W. Hodgins (1986), notes the proliferation and broadening scope of the historiography on northern Canada over the preceding decade, accompanied by the emergence of new critical approaches, methodologies, and revisionist interpretations. Focusing their review primarily on English-language, book-length volumes, the authors trace the historiography on Canada's North from its pre-1960 state of being "more an adjunct of colonial or European imperial history," fixated primarily on exploration narratives, to the mid-1960s emergence of more (but still limited) critical inquiries with broader interests. They continue to trace the historiography to the deluge of books in the 1970s, produced to meet the public's heightened demand for studies on such subjects as environmental depravation, wilderness, and the oil and gas potential of the North. Grant and Hodgins review attempts to consolidate recent research into comprehensive volumes, the proliferation of local histories written by Northerners, and the rise of comparative analyses. They also note new scholarly interest in the fur trade, early Arctic exploration, Arctic whaling, Yukon history, social history, the implications of American military activities in the Canadian North during the Second World War, and sovereignty.

In the second article, "Symbols and Myths: Images of Canoe and North" (1988), Grant looks at the myth of the North and its impact on Canada's psyche, character, and identity, focusing on the canoe as a symbol of Canadian concepts

of “north” and “northernness.” She reviews the development, endurance, and characteristics of northern myths throughout Canada’s history, including the perception of the North as the “homeland” of Indigenous peoples, the frontier or nation-building myths of the North, and the aesthetic and philosophical images of a romantic northern wilderness. Situating the canoe and its role in these various myths of the north, Grant explores how the canoe evolved as a symbol of the fur trade (and thus of the wilderness North) and as a key component and representation of the romantic wilderness myth and wilderness appreciation ideal (as well as the preservationalism, conservationism, and environmentalism cultures), to become the antithesis of or anti-symbol to progress-oriented nation-building or frontier myths. Despite these shifts, Grant argues that the canoe remains a means to understand Canada and still represents a key symbol both of Canada’s northern heritage and of freedom, tranquility, adventure, and excitement in the northern Canadian wilderness.

Grant pursues this general theme in the third article, “Myths of the North in the Canadian Ethos” (1989), in which she argues that the North has influenced Canadian identity by imparting a distinct quality to the character of the country and its people. She analyzes three primary categories—the “north as homeland,” nation-building or frontier myths, and philosophical or aesthetic images—as well as lesser myths that together comprise the core “myth of the north.” In mapping out individual myths of the Canadian North, Grant explores how Canadian perceptions of the North have evolved over time. She covers a wide range of themes, including the idea of the “north as homeland” for its Indigenous residents; the perceptions of the European explorers, settlers, and colonists; the adventure, challenge, and profit-driven fur trade myth; the aesthetic and romantic image of wilderness, originating from Britain; and the resource- and agricultural-focused pioneer myth. She interrogates the Anglo-Canadian nation-builders’ perception of a North bearing prospective riches and inspiring a unique national character through its philosophical and Social Darwinian influence. Grant also elucidates the resource myths of the western expansionists and later Northern promoters, with their frontier and resource exploitation focus, as well as the myth of the American appreciation culture with its attendant focus on preservationalism and conservationism. The British aesthetic myth and American wilderness myth, she notes, became intertwined in Canada to create a romantic myth of the North that permeated the Canadian culture and endures in the environmental movement.

In the fourth article, “Imagination and Spirituality: Written Narratives and the Oral Tradition,” published in 1997, Grant compares and contrasts the oral tradition of the Inuit culture with the written narratives of qallunaat (people who are not Indigenous Inuit) as representing two distinct cultures, views, and forms

of history. Tracing shifts in qallunaat written narratives from the nineteenth-century exploration narratives through the Franklin Expeditions and into the post-war years, Grant argues that these narratives were premised on the observations of transient visitors to the region. As such, they were imagination-driven, egocentric, chauvinistic, and nationalist, as well as influenced by Social Darwinism, Judaeo-Christianity, and the perception of man's destiny to conquer the natural world. She juxtaposes the sensationalism, exaggeration, and inaccuracy of the resultant narrative with the accuracy- and consistency-focused Inuit oral tradition. This tradition is rooted in the experiences of long-time inhabitants, passed across generations, guided by spirituality, and a means of transmitting moral values and codes of ethics. She depicts an egalitarian Inuit society living in harmony and cooperation with the natural world. Drawing comparisons between the ancient legends and teachings of the Inuit oral tradition and the Judaeo-Christian Bible, and between the two narrative forms as means of education and entertainment that simultaneously perceived their own "race" as being superior, Grant explores how each narrative has perceived and described both the other culture and the Arctic landscape (including the Western use of the picturesque and the sublime). Grant also reviews qallunaat perceptions of the Inuit oral traditions, attempts to record the ancient legends, the oral tradition's endurance and recent rebirth despite social dislocation and the threats posed by Christianity, and the Western world's enduring consumption of written narratives about the North—with the resulting misconceptions that abounded regarding Inuit. Noting a recent shift in written narratives towards increasingly incorporating Inuit voices, Grant concludes with the argument that a comprehensive and all-encompassing history of the Arctic can only be achieved through an Inuk-written narrative that centres the Indigenous peoples. Until that time, she indicates, the history of the Arctic will remain fragmented in two distinct histories and two distinct narratives.

The fifth article, "Arctic Wilderness—And Other Mythologies" (1998), observes that many Canadians continue to "conceive the Arctic as a vast area of pristine wilderness, a concept not shared by its indigenous peoples, the Inuit." The idea of an unspoiled natural frontier feeds the eco-tourism industry, while environmentalists seek to protect this wilderness against incursions by roads, mining and energy resource developers, and hunters and trappers. Inuit, who rely upon the resources of their homeland for sustenance and survival, insist that they have the right to decide how best to utilize their lands and waters to sustain them, culturally and economically. This article explains the origins of these conflicting perceptions, how they have evolved and adapted in changing contexts, and how attempts to redefine the Arctic as a wilderness preserve threatens its existence as a sustainable homeland for the Indigenous peoples. Grant argues that the onus

falls on Southern Canadians to adjust their vision and embrace a pan-Canadian myth of the North that places its Indigenous inhabitants at the centre of the Arctic landscape, rather than erasing Indigenous history, spirituality, and presence. The pristine wilderness desired by the environmentalists would preclude a viable subsistence economy sufficient to sustain Inuit people and preserve their cultural traditions, of which the freedom to hunt and fish is integral. She lays out how these irreconcilable frames underlay the conflict both between Inuit and environmentalists, as well as between Inuit and animal rights activists.

In chapter six, Grant returns to analyzing trends in historiography on the Canadian Arctic, reflecting on its “current status and blueprints for the future” (1998). For decades, she observes, the history of the Arctic was the domain of American, European, and Russian scholars. Canadian academic historians were (and mostly remain) on the periphery of Arctic historical scholarship, with the void in Arctic history being filled mainly by “geographers, surveyors, anthropologists, archaeologists, ethnologists, ethnographers, geologists, botanists, ornithologists, zoologists, journalists and novelists,” as well as government accounts of patrols and expeditions, “official” histories, popular historians, and autobiographers. Grant notes that Canadian academic historians have been particularly divorced from the area of Inuit studies, with anthropologists, sociologists, political scientists, archaeologists, and human geographers conducting the most significant research in the field. She anticipates the potential ramifications if this absence continues, providing recommendations for directions that historical research should take in the future.

In chapter seven, Grant expands on this theme in “Inuit History in the Next Millennium: Challenges and Rewards” (2001). She reiterates her view that there are two disparate histories of the Arctic—one centring on Indigenous peoples and the Inuit, and the other on the qallunaat experience—as well as two forms of Inuit history, namely the Inuit’s own oral tradition and perspective as well as the qallunaat interpretation and viewpoint. Given the minimal contributions of Canadian academic historians to Inuit historiography, and their apparent limited interest in the subject, Grant asks: “what part, if any, should Canada’s academic historians play in future Inuit historiography?” She laments the Canadian historical profession’s lack of interest in researching and writing Inuit history or conducting oral history projects; the marginalization of Inuit history even in Indigenous Studies programs; and the dominance of archaeologists, anthropologists, and geographers in the field of Inuit history. Nonetheless, the growing incorporation of Inuit voices and proliferation of Inuit-written histories is promising. Despite the challenges and prospective deterrents facing historians seeking to work in the North on Inuit history, Grant sees significant

opportunities for historians' involvement through field research, collaborations with Inuit educators based in the Arctic colleges, and interdisciplinary team projects. "Without an Inuit voice telling their story, there can be no true representation of Inuit history," Grant writes. "Yet without the active participation of the Canadian historical profession, it will be difficult to incorporate Inuit history into the fabric of Canadian social history. The challenges are many—as are the opportunities and rewards."²³

Section 2: History, Nationalism, and Justice

In article eight, "George M. Douglas and the Lure of the Coppermine" (1985), Grant analyzes George Mellis Douglas's 1911 expedition to the Coppermine mountains to examine its reported ore deposits, as well as his 1928 return to the Northwest Territories to investigate reports of copper deposits around the southeastern shores of Great Slave Lake. Reviewing Douglas's background, philosophical inspiration, and character, Grant outlines the origins, objectives, planning, and progress of the expeditions that he led, his concern for the Indigenous peoples, and his encounters and relationships with his exploration contemporaries, including John Hornby. Grant argues that, rather than his fame being derived from his status as "Hornby's friend," Douglas should be recognized as a figure with his own achievements. He extended mineral exploration further into the Far North and unveiled new regions of promise for mining promoters and geologists, becoming in several respects "the forerunner of the modern prospector." Moreover, Grant suggests that Douglas warrants special historical attention as an individual who marked "a transitional phase between the 'purposeful wanderers' of the late nineteenth century and the mid-twentieth-century scientists, prospectors and surveyors whose countless forays into the North were conducted primarily in the interest of their profession." Douglas was a man who represented both the age of discovery and the age of development into which it transitioned, Grant insists, with his selflessness, urge to prevent unnecessary hardship, and desire for independence distinguishing him from his predecessors and contemporaries.

In article nine, "Northern Nationalists: Visions of 'A New North,' 1940-1950" (1989), Grant focuses on the "architects of a 'new north'"—individuals who, from positions either within or affiliated with government circles, demanded that the government abandon its previous *laissez-faire* approach to the North and reform the administration of the North and its peoples. Grant classifies George Raleigh Parkin, Hugh Keenleyside, the Rt. Hon. Malcolm MacDonald, Trevor Lloyd, Brooke Claxton, A.D.P. Heeney, and Major-General W.W. Foster as "northern nationalists" united by "their conviction that the future of Canada lay in the responsible development of the northern frontier"

and by “their criticism of any subordination to a greater power that might result in loss of economic or political autonomy.” Grant outlines their individual backgrounds, careers, connections, motives, and interests, as well as their concerns regarding, recommendations for, and practical impacts on the North. Noting that scholars have traditionally attributed the surge in government involvement in the North in the 1940s to the “broader economic, social and political factors affecting Canada and the world at large,” Grant argues for recognition of the role these men played in their promotion of “a new north.” They should, she indicates, be acknowledged for “their success in initiating the dramatic change in Ottawa’s attitude towards government responsibility in the northern territories.”

Article ten, a previously unpublished paper on “American Defence of the Arctic, 1939-1960” that Grant delivered at the Canadian Historical Association’s annual meeting in 1990, addresses the absence of discussion in American history books of U.S. military action in Greenland and Arctic Canada during the Second World War and early Cold War. Reflecting on this “truly uncommon period of scientific advances in Arctic development,” she charts the evolution of “what began as a few weather stations and landing fields during the war” into “a sophisticated network of radar and radio communications, permanent research stations (and not-so-permanent ones on floating ice islands), extravagant military exercises, a large military base capable of housing over 15,000, and an enormous nuclear bomb shelter built into the Greenland ice cap.” During the Second World War, the American military launched its “conquest of the Arctic” by navigators, scientists, pilots, cartographers, meteorologists, and engineers, as well as the Greenland patrols. Postwar developments such as the Arctic, Desert, and Tropic Information Center (ADTIC), Arctops Project, Joint Arctic Weather Stations, and new Loran stations reflected “a pioneer phase” in regional military development. These were followed in the 1950s with the Distant Early Warning Line, Pinetree Line, Mid-Canada Line, Ballistic Missile Early Warning System, and Camp Century. Grant documents administrative foul-ups and bilateral tensions over sovereignty when “Canadian and American political masters” made decisions in determination “to protect North America from potential enemy invasion.”

In article eleven, “Why the *St. Roch*? Why the Northwest Passage? Why 1940? New Answers to Old Questions” (1993), Grant reassesses the transit of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) schooner *St. Roch* through the Northwest Passage early in the Second World War. She situates the voyage in the context of Ottawa’s plan to occupy and defend Greenland early in 1940, exploring the concerns, crisis, and wartime pressures that prompted the plans for and eventual cancellation of this “Force X” mission. Although Sergeant Henry

Larsen did not articulate the real rationale for the voyage in his posthumously published autobiography, Grant suggests that Larsen was aware of the voyage's primary purpose. The *St. Roch* captain's reference to Canada's need to demonstrate its "sovereignty over the Arctic islands" could be broadly interpreted "to include security considerations," she assesses, with his account reflecting the confidentiality demanded by his position and the mission at hand.

In article twelve, "Religious Fanaticism at Leaf River, Ungava, 1931" (1997), Grant documents an outburst of religious fanaticism at Leaf River (Tasiujaq) in northern Quebec in 1931. Drawing on personal diaries and RCMP reports detailing Corporal Finley McInnes's police investigation, Grant characterizes a syncretic religious movement that integrated Christian practices with Inuit spiritual traditions and shamanic rituals and beliefs. Reviewing the historiography around such movements, the history of contact and missionary and police activity in the region, and similar incidents of fanaticism elsewhere in the Eastern Arctic, Grant concludes that "the new faith was clearly syncretic in nature and flourished in the temporary absence of missionary supervision." The remarkable situation that occurred, however, also reflected dynamics and circumstances that were unique to Leaf River: "the rivalry between two lay preachers; the women who incited them; and the charismatic, imaginative leader who had rechristened himself Peter Napaktook. Together, they created a fertile environment for the interjection of traditional spiritual beliefs into their rudimentary knowledge of Christian practices."

In article thirteen, Grant provides a general overview of "Canadian Justice in the Eastern Arctic, 1919-1939" (1997). In 1922, the RCMP warned of "an epidemic of murderous violence" that had occurred among the Inuit population, with a police officer and two fur traders killed in the preceding two years. Compared to the Central Arctic, however, reported homicides in the East seemed fewer and less violent, with only one case brought to trial from 1918-1938 (compared to nine in the west). Drawing from interviews with Inuit Elders and former RCMP officers, supplemented by archival research, Grant explores traditional Inuit methods of law and order and social control, the history of the police presence and sovereignty concerns in the Eastern Arctic, and the police investigations and government response into other incidents of violence on the Belcher Islands and Baffin Island. While differences in the quantity and nature of violent crimes in the Canadian Arctic "can be explained by the timing and nature of previous contact relations with whalers, traders and missionaries," Grant discerns other factors that accounted for the government's decisions whether to prosecute murder suspects. These included the difficulty and cost of prosecution, the prospective need for the government to support the families of the accused in the event of their absence, the roles of "insanity" and "community

approval” as justifications for executions, and sovereignty considerations. In the Western Arctic, the growing population of trappers and adventurers demanded greater attention to homicides and the protection of the qallunaat population. By contrast, Grant argues, “the experience in the East suggests that a permanent police presence, sensitive to Inuit needs and traditions, proved a more effective means of reducing the number of violent crimes among the Inuit than ceremonial court trials.”

In article fourteen, “Dominion Land Surveyors and Arctic Sovereignty in the Early 20th Century” (2011), Grant examines the senior Dominion Land Surveyors to whom the Department of the Interior turned in the early twentieth century for advice on the unfolding prospective threats to Canada’s title and sovereignty over the Arctic islands. She outlines the careers of a prestigious circle of surveyors: Dr. William Frederick King, Dr. Édouard-Gaston Deville, Dr. Otto J. Klotz, James J. McArthur, Noel J. Ogilvie, J.B. Harkin, and John Davidson Craig. In tracing their contributions, as well as the practical results of their reports and recommendations, Grant concludes that while “[s]ome historians have suggested that Canadian officials in 1920 were unprepared and confused as to what action was required to establish firm title to the islands of the High Arctic,” the key officials “knew full well what was required to protect Canada’s title.” They had this awareness due primarily “to the professional expertise and insightful analysis of senior Dominion Land Surveyors.”

Section 3: Sovereignty, Canadian Identity, and the Weight of History

In article fifteen, “Northern Identity: Barometer or Convector for National Unity?,” Grant revisits the “myth of the North” in Canada and what she observes to be a recent decline in its significance, which she links to rising political discord and regionalism prompting the “downward spiral of national unity.” Tracing the decline of the Northern identity, she highlights the divisive influence of natural resource- and prosperity-focused discourses on the North, given the existence of a northern development program that seeks to benefit (or appears to benefit) some regions and provinces over others. Furthermore, Canada’s northern vision was tarnished by the American presence in the Arctic from the Second World War onward, prompting realizations that Canada was incapable of defending its Northern territory alone. Consequently, Canada’s northern identity fragmented into three streams: the “grand-design visionaries;” the “anti-nuclear, anti-war and environmental movements;” and the moderates between them—a split which undermined the Northern identity’s unifying role in Canadian nationalism. Alongside the disintegration of Canada’s Northern identity, Grant reviews the weakening of east-west ties in Canada, the rise of Quebec nationalism, and the increasing turn away from the promise of Northern riches towards the promise

of American markets in the south. “The decline of the northern ethos paralleled the rise of national disunity, the two forces seemingly feeding upon each other,” Grant notes. “In this respect, Canadians’ belief in a northern identity was not merely reflective, or a barometer, of unity, but a critical unifying bond and convector.” How can a Northern identity and national unity be reconstructed? She advocates for a renewal of Canadian federalism to embrace all of the territories, provinces, and Indigenous peoples. If a new Northern identity integrates “the ethics of sustainable development with the vision of prosperity, environmental protection with the image of wilderness, settlement of aboriginal rights with social justice, and self-defence with peaceableness,” Grant suggests that perhaps “Canadian nationalism could regain its true *raison d’être* of unifying the country.”

In article sixteen, “The Weight of History in the Arctic” (2013), Grant reflects on why the history of the Arctic is relevant to contemporary debates over the future of Arctic sovereignty. The “history of Arctic sovereignty reveals a number of ‘game changers’ that previously altered the *status quo*, as well as several general trends,” she observes. “Game changers” in Arctic history included the Great and Little Ice Ages, technological advancements, the Russian sale of Alaska, European power struggles and shifts, Arctic exploration, and the scientific, political, and military developments of the Second World War and Cold War. Climate change, economic conditions, and shifts in economic and military power due to conflict and war (often preceded by a loss of control over northern sea routes and adjacent waters) affected Arctic peoples’ sovereignty. Canada’s ongoing concerns about prospective American threats to its sovereignty in the Arctic Archipelago are rooted in historical “game changers” including nineteenth-century Arctic exploration, the War of 1812, and the Alaska boundary dispute. Grant emphasizes that the history of the Arctic has many lessons to teach, including the need to understand the “cultural histories” of other Arctic nations, including Russia, in order to develop an acceptance and tolerance of our differences. Sovereignty also entails obligations towards the Arctic environment and its residents, with the Arctic Council representing a cooperative forum to work with non-Arctic states to maintain regional stability and peace.

In article seventeen, “Arctic Governance and the Relevance of History,” delivered in 2013 and published in 2016, Grant argues that the history of the North American Arctic offers “important insights into previous successes and failures in governing the region, as well as previous consequences of wars and economic adversity.” Northern history also provides insight into “difficulties in adapting southern technologies to a polar environment; the inclination of overzealous reporters to prey on popular sensitivities; and the tendency to discount indigenous peoples’ determination to protect their environment and

culture for future generations.” Climate change, economic adversity, military conflict, technological advances, and the elevated demand for Arctic resources have contributed to changes in regional authority in the past. These challenges also set precedents for the contemporary world. In navigating an uncertain future, Grant emphasizes that the Arctic states must prioritize the rights of Indigenous peoples in governance, as “their knowledge and advice will be invaluable as the region undergoes further changes affecting local economies and social infrastructure.” Given the diversity across the Circumpolar North, Grant concludes with a call for tolerance, cooperation, and commitment, “both within and between the eight Arctic countries and with full support from the broader global community.”

Russia’s unprovoked further invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and the ensuing war that it has waged on that country have had spillover effects on relationships between the seven like-minded Arctic states and Russia, leading to a “pause” on Arctic Council activities involving the latter. If a spirit of cooperation had dominated the Arctic region in the period after the end of the Cold War, this appears to have been replaced by an era of competition that is heavily influenced by global dynamics. Rather than negating the value of history, this return to a divided region seems to affirm the importance of remembering, and hopefully deriving lessons from, the drivers of change in the Arctic—including geopolitics and military competition—in the twentieth century. “There’s a tenacity about Canadians of not giving up what we think we own, but if southern Canada became far more embroiled in its own economic troubles, or something else, we might not want to get involved with what it would take to defend the Arctic,” Shelagh Grant warned in 2010.²⁴ Her work continues to provide important insights into sovereignty, security, and political relationships in the face of uncertainty—and the importance of ensuring that the Indigenous peoples of the Arctic participate centrally in charting a future course for the region.

Notes

¹ Samantha Pope, “Remembering internationally acclaimed researcher, RCGS Fellow Shelagh Dawn Grant,” *Canadian Geographic*, 21 July 2020, <https://canadiangeographic.ca/articles/remembering-internationally-acclaimed-researcher-rcgs-fellow-shelagh-dawn-grant/>.

² The Grant family will be recognized in The Loft of the new museum, which will serve as a central community gathering space outside the Knowledge and Research Centre in the facility’s atrium. “Family of late Peterborough historian Shelagh Grant donates \$250,000 to new Canadian Canoe Museum,” *KawarthaNOW*, 18

August 2022, <https://kawarthanow.com/2022/08/18/family-of-late-peterborough-historian-shelagh-grant-donates-250000-to-new-canadian-canoe-museum/>.

³ Trent University, "Trent University Announces Five Honorary Degree Recipients to be Recognized at 2014 Convocation Ceremonies," 11 March 2014,

https://www.trentu.ca/newsevents/newsreleases_140311convocation.php. When introducing the session on "Narrating North" at the 22 October 2022 conference "Northern Nationalisms, Arctic Mythologies, and the Weight of History: A Conference in Memory of Shelagh Grant," held at Trent University, Wadland admitted that he had written the tribute which he then delivered at convocation.

⁴ Ken Coates, review in *Arctic* 42, no. 4 (1989): 377.

⁵ « L'utilisation de ce cadre théorique, même s'il reste implicite, permet à l'auteur d'identifier une série de variables susceptibles d'influencer le processus décisionnel (pressions de l'opinion publique, tension internationale, etc.), d'observer leur interaction et de mesurer leur influence respective. » Stéphane Roussel, review in *Études internationales* 21, no. 3 (1990): 638-641.

⁶ David Bercuson, review in *Canadian Historical Review* 70, no. 4 (1989): 587. On where the book fits in the historiography, see P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Right and Honourable: Mackenzie King, Canadian-American Bilateral Relations, and Canadian Sovereignty in the Northwest, 1943-1948," in *Mackenzie King: Citizenship and Community*, eds. John English, Kenneth McLaughlin, and P. Whitney Lackenbauer (Toronto: Robin Brass Studio, 2002), 151-168.

⁷ Robert Carney, review in *Études Inuit Studies* 13, no. 2 (1989): 137-139.

⁸ Shelagh D. Grant, "A Case of Compounded Error: The Inuit Resettlement Project, 1953, and the Government Response, 1990," in Shelagh D. Grant, *"Errors Exposed": Inuit Relocations to the High Arctic, 1953-1960*, Documents on Canadian Arctic Sovereignty and Security (DCASS) no. 8 (Calgary and Waterloo: Centre for Military, Security and Strategic Studies, Arctic Institute of North America, and Centre on Foreign Policy and Federalism, 2016), 11-12.

⁹ Morrison review quoted on the McGill-Queen's University Press webpage,

<https://www.mqup.ca/arctic-justice-products-9780773523371.php>.

¹⁰ Canadian Historical Association, "The Clio Prizes 2003," <https://cha-shc.ca/prize-winner/theodore-binnema-le-centre-de-recherche-des-cantons-de-lest-eastern-townships-research-center-shelagh-d-grant-cole-harris-william-westfall-william-c-wicken/>.

¹¹ Frank Tester, review in *Études Inuit Studies* 27, no. 1-2 (2003): 533.

¹² Dawn Berry, review in *International Journal* (Autumn 2011): 1062.

¹³ Morris Maduro, review in *Arctic* 63 (2011): 474.

¹⁴ Russell A. Potter, review in *The Arctic Book Review* blog, 19 February 2011,

<https://arcticbookreview.blogspot.com/2011/02/polar-imperative.html>.

¹⁵ Jim Prentice, review in *Policy Options*, 1 September 2010,

<https://policyoptions.irpp.org/fr/magazines/making-parliament-work/canadas-arctic-imperative-a-rich-and-fascinating-history/>.

¹⁶ Mark Medley, "Shelagh D. Grant wins Lionel Gelber Prize for Polar Imperative," *Montreal Gazette*, 1 March 2011, <https://montrealgazette.com/afterword/shelagh-d-grant-wins-lionel-gelber-prize-for-polar-imperative>.

¹⁷ Trent University, "Two Trent University Alumni Awarded Inaugural Polar Medal," 9 July 2015, https://www.trentu.ca/canadian_studies_at_50/story/155.

¹⁸ Quoted in Trent University, "Shelagh Grant Endowment to Support Graduate Students in Canadian Studies and Indigenous Studies," 11 March 2010, <https://www.trentu.ca/news/story/11159>.

¹⁹ Ken Coates and William Morrison, "The New North in Canadian History and Historiography," *History Compass* 6, no. 2 (2008): 650.

²⁰ https://www.trentu.ca/newsevents/newsreleases_140311convocation.php.

²¹ Trent University, "Shelagh Grant Endowment to Support Graduate Students."

²² See P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Northern Nationalisms, Arctic Mythologies, and the Weight of History: Conference Report," 22 October 2022, <https://www.naadsn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/22oct22-Grant-Conference-Report-Lackenbauer.pdf>; Trent University, "Trent University Hosts Historic Gathering of Influential Arctic Scholars," 24 October 2022, <https://www.trentu.ca/news/story/34663>; and Sebastian Johnston-Lindsay, "Trent Hosts Conference in Honour of Shelagh Grant Featuring Keynote by Governor General," *The Arthur* [Peterborough], 31 October 2022, <https://www.trentarthur.ca/news/trent-hosts-conference-in-honour-of-shelagh-grant-featuring-keynote-by-governor-general>.

²³ Shelagh Grant, "Inuit History in the Next Millennium: Challenges and Rewards," in *Northern Visions: New Perspectives on the North in Canadian History*, eds. Kerry Abel and Ken S. Coates (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2001), reproduced in this volume.

²⁴ Quoted in Brian D. Johnson, "Do we really own the Arctic? Why we can't protect our far North," *Macleans*, 17 May 2010, <https://www.macleans.ca/culture/books/historian-shelagh-grant-on-the-coming-struggle-over-the-canadian-arctic-and-why-we-may-soon-lose-our-sovereignty-in-the-north/>.

List of Acronyms

AC	Air Corps	BC	British Columbia
ACA	American Canoe Association	BC	Before Christ
acc.	accession	BMEWS	Ballistic Missile Early Warning System
ACC	Air Coordinating Committee (US)	C	Celsius
ACND	Advisory Committee on Northern Development	Capt.	Captain
		CBC	Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
ACUNS	Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies	CCF	Co-operative Commonwealth Federation
AD	anno Domini	CGS	Canadian Government Ship
ADTIC	Arctic, Desert, and Tropic Information Center	ch.	chapter
		CHA	Canadian Historical Association
AGES	Arctic Gold Exploration Syndicate	CIIA	Canadian Institute of International Affairs
AINA	Arctic Institute of North America	Co.	Company
AK	Alaska	Col.	Colonel
AMAP	Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme	Comm.	Commander
		Comm.	Commissioner
		Const.	Constable
ARCUS	Arctic Research Consortium of the United States	COPE	Committee for Original Peoples' Entitlement
		Cpl.	Corporal
ATB	Advisory Technical Board	CSSRC	Canadian Social Science Research Council
ATC	Air Transport Command		
AWPPA	Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act	DC	District of Columbia

<i>DCER</i>	<i>Documents on Canadian External Relations</i>	IMO	International Maritime Organization
DEW Line	Distant Early Warning Line	in. Insp.	inch Inspector
DLS	Dominion Land Surveyor	inst. ITC	instant Inuit Tapirisat of Canada
Dr.	Doctor		
DSO	Distinguished Service Order	JAWS	Joint Arctic Weather Station
E	East	km(s)	kilometre(s)
ed. / edn	edition	LAC	Library and Archives Canada
ed(s)	editor(s) / edited by	LACO	Leonard Arthur Charles Orga
F	Fahrenheit		
Gen.	General	LLD	Doctor of Laws
GÉTIC	Groupe d'études inuit et circumpolaires / Inuit and Circumpolar Study Group	LLM Lt. Lt. Col. Lt. Comm. Maj.	Master of Laws Lieutenant Lieutenant-Colonel Lieutenant Commander Major
GNWT	Government of the Northwest Territories	Maj-Gen. MG MP	Major-General Manuscript Group Member of Parliament
HBC	Hudson's Bay Company	Mt.	Mount
HBCo	Hudson's Bay Company	NA	National Archives (Washington)
HMS	His / Her Majesty's Ship	NAC	National Archives of Canada
Hon.	Honourable	NATO	North Atlantic
IBC	International Boundary Commission		Treaty Organization
IBRU	International Boundaries Research Unit	NBOHP n.d. no.	North Baffin Oral History Project no date number
ICC	Inuit Circumpolar Conference	NORAD	North American Air / Aerospace Defence Command

NWMP	North-West Mounted Police	SPRI	Scott Polar Research Institute
NWT	Northwest Territories	SS SSHRC	Steamship Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council
OIC	Officer in Charge		
Ont.	Ontario		
PCB	polychlorinated biphenyl	TB trans.	tuberculosis translated by
PCIJ	Permanent Court of International Justice	UK UN UNCLOS	United Kingdom United Nations United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
PJBD	Permanent Joint Board on Defence		
POW	Prisoner of War	US	United States
PRO	Public Records Office	USAAF	United States Army Air Forces
Prof. pt(s)	Professor part(s)	USAF	United States Air Force
PWHC	Prince of Wales Heritage Centre	USAT	United States Army Transport
QMC	Quartermaster Corps	USCG	United States Coast Guard
RAF	Royal Air Force	USCGC	United States Coast Guard Cutter
RCAF	Royal Canadian Air Force		
RCM	Royal Canadian Mounted	USN USNR	United States Navy United States Naval Reserve
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police	USS	United States Ship
RCN	Royal Canadian Navy	Vol. W WIB	Volume West Wartime
ret.	Retired		
Rev.	Reverend		Information Board
RG	Record Group	Wm.	William
RN	Royal Navy	WWII	World War II
RNWMP	Royal Northwest Mounted Police	YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association
Rt. Hon. Ser. Sgt.	Right Honourable Series Sergeant		

Section 1

Arctic Historiography, Mythology, and Symbolism

SOVEREIGNTY or SECURITY?

Government Policy in the Canadian North 1936-1950



Shelagh D. Grant

1

The Canadian North: Trends in Recent Historiography

With Bruce W. Hodgins

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THE LONG WINTER IN NORTHERN HISTORIOGRAPHY is coming to a close. During the last few years, roughly since the appearance in 1977 of Mr. Justice Berger's brilliant, incisive and controversial *Northern Frontier: Northern Homeland*,¹ the outpouring of historical writings on Canada's diverse North has almost resembled the rapid run-off of a northern springtime. In addition to the increased quantity, new themes have surfaced along with various critical interpretations and innovative methodology. Undoubtedly, within the last decade, northern historiography has entered a period of accelerated growth and change.

Much of the historical writing on northern Canada published before 1960 seemed to be more an adjunct of colonial or European imperial history, a description of discovery and exploration based on the journals of mariners, whalers, missionaries and fur traders. Emphasizing the remoteness of an alien environment, these accounts were exceedingly difficult to integrate into the popular nation-building themes so prevalent in general Canadian histories of comparable periods. Admittedly, a profusion of literature attended the Yukon gold rush, yet even this event was treated as an isolated incident, a beyond-the-frontier adventure story which at times seemed more closely tied to American than Canadian history. Then, in the mid-1960s, more critical inquiries into a broader range of interests finally appeared.² These were relatively few in number, although an intellectual thrust was added in 1966 when Carl Berger published his now famous article, "The True North, Strong and Free",³ focusing on the importance of the northern myth to our national psyche since at least the time of Confederation.

By then, members of the historical profession were becoming increasingly critical of the state of northern historiography. In 1970, while underlining the centrality of the northern experience in Canada's history, Professor W.L. Morton lamented the fact that "the North is yet to be integrated into the historiography of Canada".⁴ The next year, there appeared the most important single interpretive work on Canada's North, Morris Zaslow's *The Opening of the Canadian North, 1870-1914*.⁵ Reportedly, his follow-up volume covering the later years is now in the hands of the publishers. Indeed, since 1971, only a few historians have attempted to correlate, integrate or incorporate, in a national perspective, the many aspects of the disparate pasts of such a vast and diverse area.

In contrast to the limited number of northern histories published in the 1960s, the situation changed dramatically by the mid-1970s with the public focus on environmental deprivation and the value of wilderness, and on the alleged vast oil and gas potential in the North at a time of perceived energy shortages throughout the western world. The North was now much more topical, allowing scholars to secure research and publication support. Works of very high calibre appeared. The most influential perhaps was Louis Hamelin's *Nordicité canadienne*, or *Canadian Nordicity* in its English translation, which was a breakthrough in altering the traditional southern perceptions of the "North". Transcending political boundaries, Hamelin defines North as measured by the degree of "nordicity" in terms of settlement, climate, land forms, economic conditions and accessibility.⁶ Yet as late as 1984, Richard Diubaldo could still claim that to most southern Canadians, the North "appears to have no history, no deserved uniqueness. It remains a frozen, desolate and barren wilderness in the nation's consciousness".⁷ All criticism aside, in the past decade, northern historiography has not only proliferated but has also broadened in both scope and approach to reflect some of the revisionist trends occurring elsewhere in Canada and throughout the western world. Of special note are the particularist themes related to political and social interaction, the introduction of comparative studies, the emergence of local histories written by resident northerners, and the incorporation of ethnohistory as an integral component of the historiography of northern Canada.

By any recognizable descriptive definition, Canada's North is certainly more than one region. It is a huge area internally divided by contrasting geographic conditions, southern-prescribed political boundaries and diverse ethnic, cultural and economic experiences. United only in southern perception, there is no distinct entity that fits a universally accepted definition of North. As in *The Opening of the Canadian North*, in this survey our North is not politically confined or defined. Its boundaries are vague, shrinking somewhat northward

over time. While the majority of the works discussed relate to the Yukon and Northwest Territories, also included are a number of studies on provincial Norths. Generally, our North is sparsely populated, beyond agricultural and industrial settlement, and remote from the metropolitan centres of southern Canada. Given these broad geographical parameters, limitations have to be otherwise applied. Thus, although it has been credibly argued that the state of the art remains in academic journals,⁸ this paper will concentrate on book-length volumes, together with passing reference to periodicals that have a northern focus. Similarly, while acknowledging the excellence of the many recent studies written in French, especially on northern Quebec, it was reluctantly decided that this subject should be covered in a separate article.

Of the few attempts in recent years to consolidate and correlate current research, five works deserve special mention. From an academic perspective, an invaluable contribution to the study of northern history is Alan Cooke and Clive Holland's *The Exploration of Northern Canada, 500-1920: A Chronology* (Toronto, Arctic History Press, 1978). In addition to a comprehensive listing of explorations by land and sea, the work contains an extensive bibliography, a selection of maps and a convenient index of the key explorers. Currently out of print, this volume has proved to be a popular resource. Kenneth Coates's *Canada's Colonies: A History of the Yukon and Northwest Territories* (Toronto, James Lorimer, 1985) is the only recent publication to fit the definition of a general history of the North. This concise overview of less than 250 pages is centred on a clearly enunciated thesis statement which argues that the attitude of the Canadian government towards its two territories was tantamount to negligent colonialism. Although lack of documentation is quite acceptable for a popular textbook, the author has provided a convenient bibliography for each chapter.

The other three works of a comprehensive nature are edited volumes, each concentrating on a particular region or culture. *A Century of Canada's Arctic Islands, 1880-1980* (Ottawa, Royal Society of Canada, 1982), edited by Morris Zaslow, brings together the definitive studies of senior scholars from diverse disciplines. Organized chronologically to retain a historical perspective, the papers effectively encompass the important aspects of exploration, military and scientific activities, cultural issues, as well as economic, social and political developments in the Arctic Archipelago, with particular attention to the years 1880-1980. The thoughtful concluding essay by T.H.B. Symons, "The Arctic and Canadian Culture", explores the meaning of the Arctic for the majority of Canadians and stresses the need for more concerted effort to expand our northern studies.

Another example of exceptional editorial achievement is found in the two most recent volumes of the *Handbook of North American Indians*, published by

the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. First appearing in 1981, Volume 6 examines the sub-arctic cultural groups, with anthropologist June Helm of the University of Iowa as editor. With contributions by some 50 scholars from Canada and the United States, this is to date the most comprehensive study of the Indian tribes residing in the more than 3,200,000-square-kilometre area extending from Labrador to Alaska. In terms of time frame, this work is equally ambitious, beginning with pre-history and extending into the present. The physical and social environment is described in somewhat general terms related to the three major geographic regions and is then followed by detailed studies on the individual experiences encountered by 35 distinct cultures including the sub-arctic Métis. For the scholar, the four chapters on the history of ethnological and archaeological research are of special interest.

Identical in format, coverage and quality, Volume 5 in this series was published out of sequence in 1985. The *Handbook of North American Indians: Arctic* is edited by anthropologist David Damas of McMaster University and includes the Greenland, Alaskan and Canadian Inuit. As in the volume edited by Helm, Damas has allowed critical interpretations of the individual authors to emerge without detracting from the overall unity of the book. The anomaly of the Inuit being fully integrated into a series on "North American Indians" is only indirectly explained in the introduction, which refers to the intention of examining all North American native cultures. Similarly, the rationale for employing the designation "Eskimo" throughout is justified in terms of English and French usage, reflecting the fact that this is indeed a northern history written from a totally southern perspective.⁹

Such efforts of consolidation may be considered a sign of definite progress in northern historiography, but it is the analytical interpretation found in specific studies that will encourage greater integration of the North into Canadian history. In this category, the number of publications has multiplied dramatically in recent years. Of particular note is the renewed interest in the fur trade, now with the emphasis on ethnohistory and inter-cultural relations. Thus, we find a number of revisionist interpretations following in the tradition of Arthur Ray's *Indians and the Fur Trade* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1974), which placed the aborigines rather than the white man at the centre of study.¹⁰

The experience of the James Bay Cree from 1600 to 1870 is the subject of Daniel Francis and Toby Morantz's *Partners in Furs: A History of the Fur Trade in Eastern James Bay, 1600-1870* (Montreal/Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1983). The authors' innovative combination of historical and ethnological methodologies has resulted in a well-substantiated and convincing study, which concludes that "although events of the nineteenth century altered the Cree's relationship to the traders, they did not radically change or destroy

their relationship to the land" (p. 171). With somewhat divergent interpretations, this theme of native adaptation also appears in Shepard Krech III, ed., *The Subarctic Fur Trade: Native Social and Economic Adaptations* (Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 1984). The opening essay by Arthur J. Ray supports the general argument that the "modern welfare society" of the sub-arctic Indians "is deeply rooted in fur trade", with the major responsibility attributed to the practices of the Hudson's Bay Company (pp. 16-17). The remainder of the essays are more specific studies. Using the Fort Simpson trade as an example, Shepard Krech supports Ray's thesis, maintaining that while there may be differences "from one individual to the next, from one band to the next, from one ethnic group to the next" (p. 142), social changes among the northern Indians in the 19th century were adaptations directly related to the impact of the fur trade. In her contribution to this volume, Toby Morantz indirectly challenges the more simplistic versions of causal relationships, claiming that the social structure of certain tribes had an equal bearing on both the extent and form of disruption occurring during the initial contact period. Carol Judd, on the other hand, shows how two groups of Indians within the same tribe reacted quite differently to the Moose Factory fur trade in the mid-1700s. Despite the anthropological emphasis and the unifying theme of adaptation, the limitations of time and place in each study make direct comparisons difficult and conclusions somewhat tentative. Moreover, as Charles Bishop, Robert Jarvenpa and Hetty Jo Brumbach point out in their articles, there are distinct problems in correlating the work of anthropologists, archaeologists and historians into a credible version of fur trade history. Still, the questions raised in *The Subarctic Fur Trade* are certain to encourage continuing debate and investigation.

Shifting the focus of discussion from native historiography to that of the white man, it seems that Canadian historians have shown little interest in the early explorations of the Arctic, despite a persistent preoccupation with the 19th-century exploits of the British. At a conference held in Rome in 1981 on "The History of the Discovery of the Arctic Regions...to the 18th Century", only three of the 27 contributors were Canadians.¹¹ The expeditions of John Franklin, on the other hand, have continued to inspire some exemplary work. There also appears to be a trend towards reproducing the journals and personal diaries of Arctic explorers, sea captains and other northern travellers, some with excellent editorial explanation, annotated footnotes, illustrations and maps.

Stuart Houston's initial success with his *To the Arctic by Canoe 1819-1821: The Journal and Paintings of Robert Hood, Midshipman with Franklin* (Montreal/Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1974) has resulted in a second venture. *Arctic Ordeal: The Journal of John Richardson, Surgeon-Naturalist with Franklin, 1820-1822* (Montreal/Kingston, McGill-Queen's University

Press, 1984) is much more than a personal account of the overland expedition to the mouth of the Coppermine River. Richardson was also a botanist, zoologist, ornithologist, ichthyologist and geologist, at a time when the study of natural history was becoming a key component of polar explorations. His extensive lists of the Arctic flora and fauna alone might be considered just reason for publication of the journal, but there were other factors that made Richardson's notes unique, not the least being his description of the events and circumstances leading to the cannibalism and murder that Franklin discreetly omitted from his official report. Even the prose was of a quality rarely found in the diaries of Arctic explorers.

Recent historiography of the Franklin era continues the exhaustive inquiry into the rescue attempts. *The Pullen Expedition in Search of John Franklin* (Toronto, Arctic Press, 1979) is edited by a descendant, Admiral H.F. Pullen RCN (Royal Canadian Navy). This volume describes a lesser-known endeavour led by Commander W.J.S. Pullen RN (Royal Navy), who set out from Alaska in 1849 to follow the Arctic Coast eastward to the Mackenzie Delta. Notes, letters and diary entries are accompanied by editorial comment, charts and photographs. A biography by R.L. Richards, *Dr. John Rae* (Whitby, England, Caedmon, 1985), brings a more personal perspective into the denouement of the search through the life story of the man who succeeded in solving the mystery of the explorer's disappearance. In retrospect, the subsequent criticism Rae incurred for making public his report of cannibalism seems quite unjust compared to the many accomplishments described by his biographer.

In a successful combination of narrative and analysis, Hugh Wallace has integrated the Franklin searches into the much broader scene of Arctic exploration in *The Navy, the Company, and Richard King: British Exploration in the Canadian Arctic, 1829-1860* (Montreal/Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1980). In addition to criticizing the role of the Royal Navy, Wallace shows how Dr. Richard King's plea for an overland search was rejected, ostensibly through the influence of Hudson's Bay Company officials who hoped to discredit King for having publicly censured the fur trade as the key agent of destruction for the northern natives. In a study stripped bare of heroics and romanticism, the author effectively examines the forces responsible for the changing character of Arctic exploration during the mid-1800s.

Rectifying a longstanding omission in the historiography of Arctic exploration is William Barr's ambitious study, *The Expeditions of the First International Polar Year, 1882-1883* (Calgary, The Arctic Institute of North America, Technical Paper No. 29, 1985). From century-old reports in four languages, Barr has recreated the 14 principal and three auxiliary expeditions, focusing not just on their scientific programmes but also on their problems, failures and hardships. This work represents a major achievement in bringing the

history of scientific exploration to the fore and at the same time integrating these studies of the Canadian Arctic into the international scene.

One of the few significant works on 20th-century exploration to appear in recent years is Richard Diubaldo's *Stefansson and the Canadian Arctic* (Montreal/Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978). In contrast to the traditional focus on adversity and accomplishment, this account of the great Canadian Arctic Expedition of 1913-1918 emphasizes the backroom politics and internal dissent, reflecting the current trend in revisionist interpretations to amend earlier versions of polar exploration.

A more innovative approach to relating the narrative of Arctic exploration is found in David Pelly's *Expedition: An Arctic Journey Through History on George Back's River* (Weston, Betelgeuse, 1981). Full documentation and an impressive bibliography support the history of the George Back expedition of 1832, which is cleverly woven into the narrative of a contemporary canoe trip to create an intriguing tale correlating the past to the present. Also designed to meet scholarly standards and yet appeal to a wider audience is *Nastawgan: The Canadian North by Canoe & Snowshoe* (Weston, Betelgeuse, 1985), edited by Bruce W. Hodgins and Margaret Hobbs. This collection of papers describing a diverse range of experiences encountered by turn-of-the-century travellers in the remote wilderness integrates narrative and analysis to explain the nature and extent of Canadian fascination with northern adventures, long after the era of first discoveries had ended.

Although whaling had become the major activity in the Arctic by the late 1880s, only in the past few years have Canadian historians investigated this aspect of northern history in any depth. The unexpected value of journals belonging to lesser-known men is clearly illustrated in *An Arctic Whaling Diary: The Journal of Captain George Comer in Hudson Bay, 1903-1905* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1984), superbly edited by W. Gillies Ross. Written when whaling was in decline in the eastern Arctic, Comer's journal provides new insight into the tension existing between the American whalers and the Canadian patrols whose purpose was to show the presence of authority. The veteran captain from New England describes Inspector Moodie of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police (RNWMP) as being somewhat officious, anti-American, relatively ignorant of Arctic conditions, and over-paternalistic in his relations with the Inuit. Humour abounds in the anecdotal footnotes, as in the case of Comer's strict accounting of the children sired by the Mounted Police at Fullerton, a reported total of six from 1903 to 1910, or the request by Moodie that his position be given "the rank and title of Lt. Governor" (p. 152). Comer's impressions and Ross's notes provide a sharp contrast to the rather glorified accounts of the early patrols and an important step in revising the history of

Mounted Police activity in the Arctic.¹² Ross's latest book, *Arctic Whalers, Icy Seas: Narratives of the Davis Strait Whale Fishery* (Toronto, Irwin, 1985), again illustrates the potential of skillful editing. The personal diaries and logbooks of some 15 whalers, mostly British, are preceded and concluded with vivid descriptive narrative. A fascinating collection of period maps, documents, sketches and photographs are well integrated into the text. This work, combined with previous publications, makes Ross an undisputed Canadian authority on whaling in the eastern Arctic.¹³

Another recent contribution to the saga of Arctic whalers is Daniel Francis's *Arctic Chase: A History of Whaling in Canada's North* (St. John's, Breakwater Books, 1984). This excellent account successfully incorporates data obtained from books, articles, ships' logs and manuscript sources into a succinct analytical study of the industry and its impact on the Inuit in both the eastern and western Arctic from the 1720s into the 20th century. Francis builds up a strong case in support of his claim that overkill rather than just a declining market was responsible for the demise of Arctic whaling. In his opinion, "no one was really interested in preserving the bowhead until there were almost none to preserve". Moreover, the whalers left behind a greatly depleted Inuit population, "hungry for the white man's trade" (p. 107).

The decline of whaling indirectly encouraged the growth of the Arctic fur trade. Despite extensive study of the industry in more southerly regions, few works have dealt with operations in the Arctic. This gap is partially overcome with the publication of the Richard Bonnycastle diaries, written during his travels in the Mackenzie District while in the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company. *A Gentleman Adventurer* (Toronto, Lester, Orpen Dennys, 1984) is described by editor Heather Robertson as "an adventure story and autobiography" and a "glimpse into the secret workings of the Hudson's Bay Company". The elitist view provided by a young lawyer educated at Trinity College and Oxford brings new evidence and insight into the various stages of Inuit dependency, the nature of trader rivalry, internal reasons for the decline of trade in the 1930s over and above the Depression, and, perhaps of greater interest, the declining fortune of the Hudson's Bay Company since the 1920s, a circumstance he believed was due to ineptitude and inefficiency at various northern posts. In addition to some fascinating journal entries that appear to have been written for purely personal reasons, Bonnycastle's own photographs serve to verify his observations and impressions.

The early history of what is now the Canadian Northwest has been closely integrated into the historiography of the Pacific Coast of North America, at times appearing equally relevant to American, Russian and British imperial history.¹⁴ Yukon histories, on the other hand, unquestionably belong to the historiography

of northern Canada. The early years of European penetration in the Yukon are well covered in Theodore Karamanski's *Fur Trade and Exploration: Opening the Far Northwest, 1821-1852* (Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 1983). Well substantiated by research into Hudson's Bay Company journals and records, this exceptional narrative complements the important work of Allen A. Wright, *Prelude to Bonanza* (Whitehorse, Arctic Star, 1980 [second edition]), which focused on the trading and prospecting activities just prior to the discovery of gold in the Yukon. The Klondike Gold Rush itself, while probably the single most written about event in Canadian history, has attracted little interest of late. The only Canadian publication of note is the handsome coffee-table edition by Pierre Berton, *The Klondike Quest: A Photographic Essay, 1897-1899* (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1983). This comprehensive collection of period photographs is accompanied by a flamboyant narrative in keeping with the Berton tradition.

Although not central to the story, the Klondike saga is well integrated into Lewis Green's account of surveying the Alaska boundary, *The Boundary Hunters: Surveying the 141st Meridian and the Alaskan Panhandle* (Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 1982). Complete with maps, cartoons and photographs, the story begins with the Anglo-Russian Treaty of 1825 and traces both Canadian and American attempts to locate a mutually acceptable border. Significantly, Green offers a relatively unbiased view of the tribunal proceedings, observing that the decision was no real loss to Canada in economic or strategic terms, only a matter of losing face.

One of the more innovative approaches to social history is found in Robert G. McCandless's *Yukon Wildlife: A Social History* (Edmonton, University of Alberta Press, 1985). By tracing the development and impact of wildlife policies in the Yukon, the author has shown how government decisions in the late 1940s, combined with the influx of new settlers, had effectively impoverished the native peoples by introducing irreversible changes to their society. Tracing the origins of wildlife laws back to the Forest Laws predating the Norman Conquest, the author slowly unveils the conflicts arising between the hunters and the conservationists, and those who relied on the furbearing animals for food and clothes. Although the key actors in this compelling drama are the administrators and politicians, it is soon apparent that they are the villains and the Indians their victims.

In recent years, historians have begun to unravel the political and social implications of the American military activities in the Canadian North during the Second World War. Formerly relegated to articles in journals or unpublished papers, one aspect of the "war at home" has finally appeared in hardback. Edited by Kenneth Coates, *The Alaska Highway: Papers of the 40th Anniversary*

Symposium (Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 1985) is a collection of papers by scholars from Canada and the United States. The development of the highway is traced from the inception of the idea through to the impact on Yukon society, integrating political, military, economic and social history into a surprisingly cohesive volume. Unknown to most southern Canadians, the war years left an indelible mark on the North, and much of the history has yet to be written.

A delightful book, but one that does not quite fit the definition of scholarly history, is Richard Brown's *Voyage of the Iceberg* (Toronto, James Lorimer, 1983). Admitting to taking some liberties with speculation, the author has traced the imaginary path of a large iceberg from its probable origins in Greenland's Jakobshavn Fjord to its contact with the ill-fated *Titanic* on 14 April 1912. Along the route, he has interwoven detailed descriptions of Arctic whale hunts, the Newfoundland seal hunts, Inuit customs and hunting practices, and the numerous species of wildlife in the eastern Arctic. Having himself travelled the route on oceanographic vessels, Brown adeptly combines biology, ethnology and history into a fanciful tale of the Arctic. Considering the excitement in the fall of 1985 over the discovery of the sunken luxury liner, this book has indeed turned out to be timely.

Quite apart from northern histories written by southern scholars, there is a new phenomenon emerging in the past decade: the growth of local histories written by northerners, many published by northern presses located in Whitehorse or Yellowknife. More popular than scholarly by strict definition, they nevertheless are providing an invaluable insight into northern living as it is and was. Many authors are relatively new to the North, well educated and attracted to the region by careers in the civil service or education, as in the case of Alfred Aquilino, who moved to the Mackenzie Delta from Ontario in 1975 to work for the Department of Social Services. *The Mackenzie: Yesterday and Beyond* (Vancouver, Hancock House, 1981) is described by the author as "a historical journey...filled with the lives and spirits of the people who make up the vital mosaic of the Mackenzie River, its Delta and hinterland". Photographs and poetry add colour and feeling to an otherwise factual account of the people and communities of the region. Another window on the past is presented in *Christmas in the Big Igloo: True Tales from the Canadian Arctic* (Yellowknife, Outcrop, 1983), an anthology of 20 recollections of Christmas dating back to 1821. Edited by Kenn Harper, a teacher, anthropologist, historian and linguist who has lived in the eastern Arctic since 1966, this small but attractive book very simply portrays a wide variety of experience and perceptions encountered by Inuit, explorers, government and company employees, missionaries and fur traders.

There is an age-old debate over the value of autobiography as history or even as an historical tool, yet some life stories are undoubtedly more effective than scholarly works in correcting popular misconceptions. Outcrop Limited, a small but flourishing publishing house located in the capital of the Northwest Territories, is responsible for two recent autobiographical accounts of life in the Mackenzie District. Frederick Watt, a reporter now residing in Victoria, B.C., recounts his prospecting endeavours in the early 1930s. *Great Bear: A Journey Remembered* (1980) focuses on the lesser-known mining rush into the Barrens sparked by Gilbert LaBine's discovery of pitchblende on the shores of Great Bear Lake. Covering a much broader experience in time and place, *Rebels, Rascals & Royalty: The Colourful North of LACO Hunt* (1983) follows the adventures of a 30-year on-and-off resident of the Northwest Territories. LACO — short for Leonard Arthur Charles Orga — arrived in Canada in 1928 as an apprentice with the venerable Hudson's Bay Company. After ten years in its employ, Hunt resigned when he received a formal rebuke for his public statement that "some Indians were dying of malnutrition and starvation and that the government should be censured for its attitude". Hunt returned to the North in 1950 as a government administrator assigned to the Aklavik District. From there he went to Ottawa, and then to a posting at the United Nations. He eventually returned to the nation's capital and was appointed Executive Secretary of the Advisory Committee on Northern Development. As indicated in the sub-title, the story centres on his experiences in the North: Part I dealing with "The Pioneer North" from 1928-1939, and Part II, "The North Comes of Age", describing the post-war years. In many ways, the pattern of Hunt's career was analogous to the changes occurring in northern Canada during the decades preceding and following the Second World War, a transitional phase that saw government take over from the Hudson's Bay Company as the largest single employer in the Northwest Territories.

An outstanding example of one man's attempt to correct southern misconceptions is the story of Ernie Lyall's lifetime experiences in the eastern Arctic. *An Arctic Man: Sixty-Five Years in Canada's North* (Edmonton, Hurtig, 1979) is a virtual gold mine of minutia, with vivid images of unvarnished realities that only a northerner could have described. The motive for writing the book was rather simple. According to Lyall, "the outsiders, or what I call the outsiders, have written so much baloney that sometimes it's hard for me to recognize in their books the land and the people that I know so well". Southern perceptions and romantic notions of the Arctic may be shattered, yet Lyall may have come closer than most in his effort to get the facts straight.

Two other "local" northern books deserve special mention. Both were privately published and pictorial, providing a subjective view of northern natives.

Our Métis Heritage...A Portrayal (Yellowknife, 1976) was produced and published by the Métis Association of the Northwest Territories. Describing it as “a visual presentation of the history”, the authors coordinated the many period photographs with a short but incisive narrative to depict the life of the Mackenzie Valley Métis, “equipped with survival mechanisms to operate in both worlds”. Another publication mirroring the life, thoughts and emotions of northern natives is *Denendeh: A Dene Celebration* (Yellowknife, 1984), published and “authored” by the Dene Nation. The text contains a complete history of the people and their land, hopes and ambitions. The magnificent full-colour photographs are by René Fumoleau, the Oblate priest whose book on Treaties 8 and 11 was successful in forwarding the native position in the land claims dispute.¹⁵ His sensitivity and understanding of the native people among whom he has lived for more than 25 years are clearly evident in his selection of subjects and artful interpretation.

Discussion of local histories, whether by region or culture, would not be complete without mention of *A Vast and Magnificent Land: An Illustrated History of Northern Ontario*, published jointly by Lakehead University (Thunder Bay) and Laurentian University (Sudbury) in 1984. Edited by Matt Bray and Ernie Epp, this volume deserves recognition as a serious attempt to describe the origins and growth of settlement and industry in the remote hinterland of Canada’s most populated province. Despite some shortcomings in both format and content,¹⁶ the public interest aroused by this book, now in its second printing, should encourage further study of what in many respects is an unrecognized region of Canada. Already, a popular history of the Temiskaming and Northern Ontario Railway has appeared, *Link with a Lonely Land* (Erin, Ontario, Boston Mills, 1985) by Michael Barnes, a local schoolteacher. Although lacking the scholarly detail and incisive analysis of Albert Tucker’s *Steam into Wilderness: Ontario Northland Railway, 1902-1962* (Toronto, Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1978), this recent publication, with its many photographs and anecdotes, will likely entertain many northern Ontario residents and visitors. Particularly in those regions where identity has a special meaning for the inhabitants, popular local histories play a significant role in recapturing the spirit of that identity.

Several recent publications have endeavoured to explain current issues affecting northern natives by utilizing an in-depth historical approach. Daniel Raunet’s *Without Surrender, Without Consent: A History of the Nishga Land Claims* (Vancouver, Douglas and McIntyre, 1984) traces government policy and the intrusion of the European settler into the life of the Nishga tribe in northwestern British Columbia. This detailed account shows how white man’s history can be effectively integrated into native history while still maintaining the centrality of the Indian. Employing an anthropological perspective rather than a

historical one, Hugh Brody examines the cultural heritage of the Beaver Indians of northeastern British Columbia in *Maps and Dreams* (Vancouver, Douglas and McIntyre, 1981). As in his earlier introspective analysis of the eastern Inuit,¹⁷ Brody rejects the methodology and format employed by most social scientists and bases his approach on oral histories and insights gained during his 18-month residence on the reserve. The result is a subjective view of the present, explained through events and traditions of the past. As to the future, Brody's message is clearly stated: only a guaranteed hunting territory can slow the negative effects of the receding frontier.

Another very current issue is examined from a historical perspective in William R. Morrison's *Under the Flag: Canadian Sovereignty and the Native People in Northern Canada* (Ottawa, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1984). Beginning with a discussion on the theory of sovereignty, and followed by the history of Canadian claims to title over the Arctic Archipelago and adjacent mainland, Morrison goes on to describe Canada's first efforts to assert her authority over the territorial North and its original inhabitants. With the major focus on the late 1880s to the end of the First World War, this study shows that the establishment of sovereignty met with virtually no resistance, in spite of the government's reluctance to incur any unnecessary expenditure on behalf of the natives. *Under the Flag* provides an appropriate background for Morrison's earlier work on the history of native land claims in northern Canada.¹⁸

More theoretical probing of northern problems is contained in *A Choice of Futures: Politics in the Canadian North* (Toronto, Methuen, 1981) by Gurston Dacks. Here the political scientist expands and substantiates the thesis that the northern issues of today are rooted in policy decisions of the past, and their solutions dependent on more constructive government attitudes in the future.¹⁹ By comparison, Nils Ørvik has centred his studies more on external factors that affect the North and its security. In a collection of essays compiled in volume No. 1-83 of the Northern Studies Series, *Northern Development, Northern Security* (Kingston, Queen's University, 1983), Ørvik points to three major components in a northern "power triangle" conflict: the natives, private industry and the federal government. Using the history of Greenland as an example of comparable circumstance, he argues for a more progressive approach in combining internal and external considerations in the policy debates of the future.

Attempts by the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC) to foster a sense of unity among the Inuit of Alaska, Canada and Greenland have resulted in a rather unusual deployment of the comparative method, both in time and place, to describe the transitional changes occurring since the days of Rasmussen's Fifth

Thule Expedition. *Oil and Amulets* (St. John's, Breakwater Books, 1983) is written by Danish-born journalist Philip Lauritzen, who has travelled extensively in the Arctic with Greenland's representatives in the ICC. By contrasting Rasmussen's observations with his own views of Inuit communities across the Arctic, the author has endeavoured to make a multiple comparison of past and present. In the Canadian edition, translated by R.E. Buehler, the similarities of experience and attitude are stressed, with differences explained in terms of varying government policies. This book should provide incentive for historians to tackle more comparative analysis in their study of white man's impact on various aboriginal cultures.

Another work that utilizes comparative methodology to probe our northern sensibility is Roald Nasgaard's *The Mystic North: Symbolist Landscape Painting in Northern Europe and North America, 1890-1940* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1984), published in conjunction with an exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ontario. The paintings, which included a number by Canada's Group of Seven, were selected to explain Nasgaard's argument that the artists of northern Europe, particularly the Scandinavian countries, shared a "common set of subjects, feelings and structures". In his belief, the trend towards wilderness subjects and a more spiritual, mystic quality of expression began in Europe and was only later adopted by the Group of Seven. Similarly, just as Canadians' perception of their North was influenced by these landscape paintings, so were the people of northern Europe. Although a number of Canadian historians have attempted to define the "myth of the North" in the Canadian identity,²⁰ Nasgaard has transcended nationalism to show that all Norths have had an immeasurable impact on thought and culture in the northernmost regions of the western world.

The proliferation of northern histories appearing in book form has not diminished the excellence of scholarship in academic journals. By far the oldest and still one of the best sources for northern history is the Hudson's Bay Company's *Beaver*, which Richard Diubaldo has described as being "to the north what the *Canadian Historical Review* is to Canadian History".²¹ While this is undoubtedly true, there are also other excellent periodical sources for northern studies.²² In light of the trend toward comparative studies, one very new periodical must be noted. *Fram: The Journal of Polar Studies* was conceived as "a positive reaction to the shortcomings of traditional scholarship relative to the Arctic and Antarctic regions" and designed to "enhance and complement contemporary historical inquiry".²³ This ambitious venture, published in the United States but with a multi-national editorial board, has promised between 400,000 and 500,000 words per year to include monologues, reprints, translations, oral histories, maps, photographs, bibliographies, indexes and

reviews. From the quality and diversity of scholarship appearing in the first two volumes, this journal promises to be an outstanding resource for students of northern history.

The criticism that the North has not been fully integrated into Canadian history is probably still valid, due in part to the fact that the North, as most Canadians know it, has remained for so long a remote and alien environment, relatively, isolated from the settled south. In terms of more recent history, this has become increasingly less so, with the result that the northern experience is more easily incorporated into 20th-century economic and political histories. For earlier periods, integration may be difficult, but not impossible.²⁴

Without question, the historiography of northern Canada has proliferated and broadened its scope in recent years, while at the same time incorporating many revisionist interpretations. Still, potential areas of future study appear endless. In the economic sphere, there are numerous possibilities: the Arctic fur trade, sealing, transportation and recreation, to name only a few. Certain specific topics demand more investigation: the missions, the Eastern Arctic Patrol, the northern Mounted Police posts and the Hudson Bay Railway. Comparative studies also offer interesting topics: the Inuit of Canada, Alaska, Greenland and the Soviet Union; mineral development in Spitzbergen, Greenland and the Arctic Archipelago; the adaptation of the Métis and the Laplanders; the evolution of political institutions and self-government in the Yukon, Northwest Territories, Alaska, Greenland and northern Australia; or even just settlement growth in various Arctic regions. The only major impediment is the cost involved in travel. At a time when Ottawa is making severe cutbacks in social science research grants, the problem has even more serious implications over the long term.

For the southern historian, the study of northern Canada is sometimes akin to probing beyond the frontier. The increasing number of local histories written by northerners should inspire further and more serious inquiry into social interaction and regional development. For the northerner, local histories have become not just a means of preserving the past, but a rather subtle yet effective way of educating the "outsiders". The North as a factor in the Canadian identity has long been acclaimed; the North in Canadian historiography is only beginning to show its potential.

Notes

¹ Thomas Berger, *Northern Frontier: Northern Homeland: The Report of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry*, Volume 1 (Ottawa, 1977).

² Examples of note are Diamond Jenness, *Eskimo Administration II* (Montreal, 1964 [Arctic Institute of North America, Technical paper no. 141]); R.A.J. Phillips,

Canada's North (Toronto, 1967); and Kenneth Rea, *The Political Economy of the Canadian North: An Interpretation of the Course of Development in the Northern Territories of Canada to the Early 1960s* (Toronto, 1968).

³ Carl Berger, "The True North, Strong and Free", in Peter Russell, ed., *Nationalism in Canada* (Toronto, 1966), pp. 3-26.

⁴ W.L. Morton, "The 'North' in Canadian Historiography", *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, Ser. IV, Vol. VIII (1970), pp. 31-40.

⁵ (Toronto, 1971). Note also Morris Zaslow, *The Northwest Territories, 1905-1980* (Ottawa, 1984 [Canadian Historical Association, Booklet no. 38]).

⁶ Louis Hamelin, *Nordicité canadienne* (Montréal, 1972); *Canadian Nordicity* (Montreal, 1978).

⁷ Richard Diubaldo, "The North in Canadian History: An Outline", *Fram*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Winter 1984), p. 187.

⁸ Richard Diubaldo, "The North: Bibliographical and Research Considerations", *Fram*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Summer 1984), p. 494.

⁹ With the notable exception of the Smithsonian publications, those interested in up-to-date definitive histories of the various Canadian Inuit cultures will have to seek out the anthropological and archaeological monologues in academic journals, the proceedings of workshops and conferences on Northern affairs, or studies sponsored by such federal agencies as the Archaeological Survey, the Ethnological Service and the National Museum. By comparison, there have been a number of recent studies on the Alaskan Inuit, including the publication by Limestone Press, Dorothy Jean Ray, *Ethnohistory in the Arctic: The Bering Strait Eskimo* (Kingston, Ont., 1983). Instead, Canadians seem content with editorialized picture books. In the field of art history, this is quite appropriate, as with Alistair Macduff and George M. Galpin's *Lords of the Stone: An Anthology of Eskimo Sculpture* (North Vancouver, 1982).

¹⁰ An example of fur trade historiography with the European at the centre is Peter Newman's *Company of Adventurers* (Markham, Ont., 1985).

¹¹ The papers delivered at the conference were reprinted in their entirety in the December 1984 issue of *Arctic*, Vol. 37, No. 4. Of the three Canadian contributors, only one might be designated an historian: Guy Mary-Rousselière, an Oblate missionary from Pond Inlet.

¹² Not available to the authors at the time of writing is W.R. Morrison, *Showing the Flag: The Mounted Police and Canadian Sovereignty in the North, 1894-1925* (Vancouver, 1985).

¹³ An earlier study placed more emphasis on the American whalers and their impact on the Inuit: W. Gillies Ross, *Whaling and Eskimos: Hudson Bay 1860-1951* (Ottawa, 1975 [National Museum of Man, Publications in Ethnology No. 10]). By contrast, *Arctic Waters, Icy Seas* centres more on the industry itself, the techniques employed and the hardship suffered by the crews.

¹⁴ Primary examples are Glynn Barratt's *Russia in Pacific Waters, 1715-1825: A Survey of the Origins of Russia's Naval Presence in the North and South Pacific* (Vancouver, 1981), and the sequel appearing two years later, *Russian Shadows on the British Northwest Coast of North America, 1810-1890: A Study of Rejection of Defence Responsibilities*. Also see Barry Gough's three books, also published by the University of British Columbia Press: *The Royal Navy and the Northwest Coast of North America, 1810-1914* (1971); *Distant Dominion: Britain and the Northwest Coast of North America, 1579-1809* (1980); and *Gunboat Frontier: British Maritime Authority and Northwest Coast Indians, 1846-1890* (1984).

¹⁵ René Fumoleau, *As Long as this Land Shall Last: A History of Treaty 8 and Treaty 11, 1870-1939* (Toronto, 1975).

¹⁶ The photographs were of exceptional interest but often unrelated to the accompanying text. Furthermore, the emphasis on group pictures in urban settings tends to underestimate the proportion of uninhabited land. While one recognizes the difficulty of covering such a broad topic without omissions, it is surprising to find no mention of the numerous Indian communities and only a vague reference to the extensive recreational canoeing that has attracted many adventurers to "the vast and magnificent land" since the turn of the century. After the first two chapters, the land and the native people seem to be obscured by the focus on industrial activity.

¹⁷ Hugh Brody, *The People's Land: Inuit, Whites and the Eastern Arctic* (Middlesex, England, 1975).

¹⁸ William Morrison, *A Survey of the History and Claims of the Native Peoples of Northern Canada* (Ottawa, 1981).

¹⁹ Also note Robert J.D. Page, *Northern Development: The Canadian Dilemma* (Toronto, 1986), not available to the authors at the time of writing.

²⁰ As an example, see W.L. Morton, *The Canadian Identity* (Toronto, 1972), p. 146, and Morton, "The 'North' in Canadian Historiography".

²¹ Diubaldo, "The North: Bibliographical and Research Considerations", p. 495.

²² Examples are *Arctic*, an interdisciplinary journal published by the Arctic Institute of North America; *The Musk-Ox: A Journal of the North*, out of the University of Saskatchewan; *North/Nord*, produced under the auspices of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development; and *Northern Perspectives*, a bulletin published bi-monthly by the Canadian Arctic Resources Committee. *Arctic Anthropology* and *Études Inuit/Inuit Studies* round out the list.

²³ S.C. Jackson, "Editorial Comments", *Fram*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Summer 1984), p. 381.

²⁴ For instance, see John Webster Grant's *Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and the Indians of Canada in Encounter since 1534* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1984), where a full chapter deals with the achievements and failures of Arctic missionaries, as an extension of experiences elsewhere in Canada.

2

Symbols and Myths: Images of Canoe and North

First published in *Canexus: The Canoe in Canadian Culture*, eds. James Raffan and Bert Horwood (Toronto: Betelgeuse, 1988).

Since the time of Confederation, Canadians have looked upon their north as a reflection of identity and destiny. Often referred to collectively as the myth of the north, various perceptions of the northern wilderness have left a lasting imprint on the national psyche, explaining the special meaning attached to the concept of north. The core myth is the least tangible: the belief that the north has imparted a unique quality to the character of the Canadian nation. At the same time, Canadians have associated various images with their concept of north that, through time, have become accepted as symbols. In contrast to the abstract ideas incorporated into myths, symbols are tangible, well defined and visible. Although the maple leaf and the red-coated mounted policeman are perhaps the most universally acclaimed symbols of Canada, there are others that have been recognized as representing the nation's "northernness:" the beaver, the loon, the caribou and the canoe—all of which appear on our 1987 coins. The beaver and canoe, in particular, signify the centrality of the fur trade in our northern heritage.

The canoe figures prominently in other northern myths, notably the aesthetic and philosophical wilderness myths. One also could argue that the canoe represents the antithesis of the progress-oriented frontier or nation-building myths. But what, in this context, is a myth, and what a symbol? A myth may be a traditional narrative embodying popular views of natural or social phenomena; it can be a fictitious person, thing or idea, even a story or collection of stories. This implies that a myth is a perception rather than a fact, but a recent and convincing argument claims that fact and interpretation cannot exist independently and that myths are "attempts to depict a reality which is not easy to grasp," an inevitable result of society's efforts "to make sense of the world."¹ In essence, a myth is a perception, image or notion that explains something. The

myth of the north, then, explains the impact of the north on the Canadian psyche.

Oxford defines a symbol as an object that represents or typifies an idea as a means of identification; hence, the voyageur canoe is symbolic of Canada's fur trade heritage, the canvas-covered cedar strip linked with recreational sport, the kayak with the Inuit—all reflecting a close bond with the northern wilderness, past and present, but with qualification. Yet the idea of north readily conjures up other images: the midnight sun, polar bears, dog sleds, icebergs and igloos. Moreover, in relating symbols to experience, both native and non-native northerners of the Yukon and Northwest Territories tend not to perceive the canoe as symbolic of the north because of their increasing reliance on motorized boats, and because the traditional birch bark canoe was not indigenous to the region. Thus, the canoe as a symbol of the north is more likely a mid-north or southern perception.

The terms "canoe" and "north" must also be clearly defined. Initially, "canoe" comes from the Caribbean Arawak language, meaning simply "a boat." However, the term became generic for deckless watercraft of the New World, whether a boat of bark or skin or a wooden dugout. By definition, "a canoe is an open watercraft of hollow form, generally shaped at each end to improve its hydrodynamic qualities, and designed originally to be propelled by one or more occupants, facing forward and using paddles or push-poles."² The birch bark canoe, commonly identified with the Woodland Indians, and the kayak, associated with the Inuit, have been modified to accommodate current Euro-Canadian construction methods and materials, but have retained essentially the same contour lines.

In Canada, the term "north" not only refers to the politically defined Yukon and Northwest Territories, but is equally applicable to Labrador, northern Quebec and Ontario, as well as to northern regions of the prairie provinces and British Columbia. Louis-Edmond Hamelin, professor of geography at Laval University, described the concept of "northernness" as measured by such factors as physical geography, climate, vegetation, isolation, population density and economic activity.³ Hugh Brody, on the other hand, refers to the gradual expansion of the agricultural frontier, with the result that "north then, is the other side of the conveniently sliding divide. The 'real' north keeps moving north, but never ceases to exist."⁴ A reverse description by the editors of *Nastawgan* claims "the historic north moves southward as one moves back in time."⁵ North can also be a state of mind, directly related to one's experience. From either perspective, the two words, north and wilderness, are often considered synonymous.

In recent decades, historians have attempted to explain the economic, physical and psychological impact of north on the nation's ethos. Initially, W.L. Morton described the Canadian Shield as an immense heartland affecting the character of the people, their mode of living and the economy upon which they depend. He later declared that "the comprehensive meaning of Canadian history is to be found where there has been no Canadian history, in the North."⁶ Carl Berger argued that the belief that the North exerted a powerful influence on national character and identity originated from an Anglo-Saxon myth that promised future prosperity to a northern country populated with people of northern races.⁷ More recently, Robert Page wrote that southern attitudes towards the north were historically a combination of a romantic vision, "deeply implanted in the national consciousness," and one of "greed and economic exploitation," and that, even today, Canadians have retained "much of the traditional mythology, including its basic split between development goals and idealism."⁸ Bruce W. Hodgins also described how conflicting images of north have persisted in Canadian historiography, causing confusion and debate as to the degree of influence and meaning.⁹ Most scholars, however, agree that Canada's north has inspired national unity by creating a sense of unique identity in an American-dominated continent.

The role of the canoe in our northern heritage has also received increasing attention in the academic community, as evidenced in the recently published *Nastawgan* and the illustrated history, *The Canoe*, by Roberts and Shackleton. In *The Canoe and White Water*, C.E.S. Franks claims that Canadians' "lack of appreciation of the arts of canoeing" stemmed from the fact that the fur trade had no substantial contact with the agricultural frontier. As a result, "white water canoeing was only a mythological, not a visible, fact in most of settled Canada."¹⁰ The logic of this argument accepted, a further hypothesis to consider is one relating images of the canoe to the contradictions inherent in Canada's northern myths.

Every society has its own set of myths to explain its origins and character. While there may be personal connotations to perception and interpretation, it is the collectivity of similar attitudes that gives credence and strength to a myth. The same is true for symbols. The universality of acceptance may be measured by the degree to which these have been integrated into a nation's cultural framework, as reflected in folk songs and ballads, poetry and prose, art, theatre and dance. Despite the complexities of regionalism, there is a strong consensus that the various myths of the north have impacted popular attitudes and perceptions to create a unique Canadian character and national identity.

Most northern myths were based on perceptions of land and climate, varying according to the cultural traditions of the observers. With qualification owing to

overlap, several categories arise: the aesthetic and philosophical images; the frontier or nation-building myths; and "the north as homeland." All were rooted in first-hand experience, then molded by idealism, regionalism and the cultural baggage of new immigrants, and eventually transmitted to future generations through literature, music and art. The resulting "myth of the north" became an amorphous, obscure, yet constant theme in Canadian nationalism. When viewed as a whole, it is full of contradictions; when considered in its parts, it has been a source of celebration, pride and promise. The canoe plays a central role in several of these myths and thus shares some of the prestige and honour as a symbol of Canada's northern heritage.

The oldest perception of north is that of "homeland" belonging to the indigenous peoples. While there are many cultures and subcultures among the Indians and Inuit of northern Canada, they share similar attitudes towards the land as a result of their adaptation to what most southerners consider a hostile environment. To the Inuit, it is *Nunatsiaq*—the beautiful land. As described by Fred Bruemmer, who has lived and travelled extensively in the Arctic,

He (an Inuk) was part of it; it brought him sorrow and it brought him joy, and he lived in harmony with it and its demands, accepting fatalistically, its hardships, exulting in its bounty and beauty.¹¹

The Dene of the Northwest Territories held similar beliefs. In the Athapaskan languages, there is no word for wilderness. Wherever they travelled, it was "home." In the words of one Dene, the land represented "the very spirit of the Dene way of life. From the land came our religion ... from the land came our life ... from the land came our powerful medicine ... from the land came our way of life."¹² The north as homeland was never "owned" in the sense of western man. The land belonged to the Creator and, in the Dene expression, was only borrowed for their children's children.

Quite naturally, canoes in their various forms were closely identified with the indigenous people who created them and who depended upon them for their existence. In the Arctic, the Inuit covered wooden or bone frames with sealskins to build their kayaks and umiaks. The Woodland Indians utilized the bark of birch trees to fashion the sturdy craft required to traverse the lakes and rivers in search of game. Smaller trees naturally produced smaller canoes of different construction and with more seams, as in the case of the crooked canoe used by the Cree of northern Quebec. In the absence of birch bark, there were wooden dugouts, canoes fashioned from elm bark, or wooden frames covered by moose hide.

These vessels were objects of great pride and were often decorated with emblems to distinguish the owners. The art of canoe building was passed down through generations, with the design adapted to available materials and the

demands of the waterways. Quite apart from the primary utilitarian purpose, the canoe was also used in competitive sports and for ceremonial purposes. While it is true that, to the aborigines, the canoe and its various adaptations were considered "an extension of their home,"¹³ their perception of being at one with the environment would include the canoe as an extension of oneself, a link to the natural world. As such, there was an attendant spiritual connotation. This was particularly highlighted among cultures that used the canoe to transfer their dead to the burial ground, or as a coffin on the premise that, in death, "a spirit canoe" would carry them into another life. Thus, to the many indigenous peoples of northern Canada, the canoe or kayak was identified more with individuals or families rather than with the physical environment.

Inevitably, it was the adoption of the birch bark canoe by European fur traders that inspired the more widely accepted association of canoe and north. Although the beaver is undoubtedly the most popular symbol of Canada's fur trade, the voyageur canoe certainly ranks a close second. Just as the horse was considered as symbolic of the American western frontier, the canoe represented the north in Canadian history; both were means by which the Europeans initially penetrated the wilderness regions of the New World. Subtle differences emerged later.

The canoe ultimately took on some of the legendary qualities of its masters. Just as one often refers to the image of "the solitary Indian and his canoe," the fur trade canoe became identified with the *coureurs de bois* who sought freedom and adventure in the wilderness. These recalcitrant entrepreneurs were considered of questionable character, despised by the missionaries and distrusted by officials, but they also represented adventure and challenge. Instead of conquering or attempting to civilize the wilderness, they sought to preserve it from encroachment by agricultural settlement. As a result, the colonists of New France acquired contradictory perceptions of the *pays d'en haut*: the image of a resource-rich but remote, hostile and godless wilderness, yet at the same time symbolic of excitement and freedom, a place where one could escape the regulated society of the French regime and make a fortune in furs. The venerable birch bark canoe was the celebrated vehicle to freedom and adventure, and similarly the means of return to loved ones and family.

Following the Conquest, the voyageurs hired by the Nor'Westers gave further credence to established fur trade myths. These men toiled endlessly without complaint, proud of their strength and skill, joyous of their freedom and relative independence. After the amalgamation of the two major rivals, the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company, the term "voyageur" came to be commonly used to describe most participants in the fur trade, portraying a romantic image similar to that of the original *coureurs de bois*. As a result, the

voyageur and his canoe became fully integrated into both English and French versions of our cultural heritage. According to the authors of *The Canoe*:

The voyageurs have left to history the image of a happy and carefree fraternity, always singing to the rhythm of their paddles, cock-proud of the finery they donned just before arriving at the trading fort, feasting like gluttons when there was food to spare, pushing on stoically when the pot was empty.¹⁴

The canoes themselves became virtual objects of art, crafted with care and decorated with the company crest and additional Indian or European motifs.

Much of our present knowledge of the fur trade canoes and their role in our heritage has come by way of the diaries of fur traders and missionaries. Their attention to detail and desire to relate their impressions and emotional experiences have provided succeeding generations of writers and scholars with an authentic mirror on the past. An almost magical connotation was attributed to the voyageurs by a former Hudson's Bay employee, who described the thrill of hearing the "wild romantic song" and seeing a brigade of twenty or more canoes rounding a promontory, "half shrouded in the spray that flew from the bright vermilion paddles."¹⁵ Less romantic accounts inform us that the canoes used by the voyageurs were not the 16- and 17-foot trippers of the 20th century but veritable giants such as the *canot du maître*, a 36-foot freighter weighing 600 pounds and carried by four men, or the *canot du nord*, which weighed only 300 pounds and was carried by two men. At the same time, visual images of these great canoes have been faithfully preserved in the paintings of John Halkett, Frances [Anne] Hopkins, Arthur Heming and others. If pictures are worth a thousand words, the legends of the fur trade canoes have been told and retold the world over, in galleries and private homes, and through countless reproductions appearing on posters, in books and in magazines.

A number of French-Canadian folk tales focused on the tragedies or heroic feats encountered in the fur trade. The characters and details of the plots were original, but adaptations of European fables were assimilated into some of the folktale "lessons." The tale of *La Chasse Galerie* is a classic example, and one which accentuates the imagery linking the canoe to the wilderness. Related to the stories of those condemned to eternal damnation for having sold their souls to the devil, one version describes the flying canoe as having transported lonely men from a remote northern lumber camp to their loved ones in Montreal. Alas, the canoe was sterned by none other than the devil himself, and its eager occupants paid dearly for their voyage.¹⁶ Of significance here was the positive image of the canoe as a vehicle providing escape from a negative image: the fearful isolation of the north.

The folk songs of the fur trade are equally important in assessing the significance of symbols and myths. Singing and chanting in time to the dip of the paddles were means of keeping a steady pace and relieving the monotony of long stretches of lake travel, and the message varied to fit the mood or the occasion. Over time, folk songs go through many adaptations and revisions, both in words and tune. The origins of “The Masterless Men” are cited as a *coureur de bois* speech from *Welcome to New France*; translated, it reads:

We have slipped from the grip of the Church
We have travelled beyond the reach of the King
We are the children of the wind
We are the masterless men.

An English version written in the 1980s illustrates the enlargement of the imagery over a span of two centuries:

The paddles keep time as our voices ring out
And songs touch the furthestmost shore
The rocks answer back with our laughing and singing
And we're off to the northwest once more.

We are the masterless men!
We harken to no one's command.
We roam where we please, cross the lakes through the trees,
We are the masterless men.¹⁷

Undeniably, the image of the *voyageur* canoe has evolved into a symbolic association with freedom, adventure and the wilderness north.

While it is clearly evident that the canoe is central to our fur trade heritage, another link must be examined to explain its continued role in the enduring romantic myth of the north, one which reinforced the image of freedom, adventure and escape into the wilderness, derived from the fur trade myths. By the early 19th century, the political and industrial revolutions in Europe gave birth to changes in social and intellectual perceptions. In Britain, the age of Romanticism was accompanied by an increasing fascination with the relationship of man to his natural environment. It was the era of Wordsworth and Byron, of Turner and Constable—literary men and artists who began to express their perceptions in terms of either the “sublime,” an accentuation of the mystery and grandeur of nature, or the “picturesque,” denoting a harmonious relationship between mankind and nature. By the 1830s, American painters such as Thomas Cole adopted the “sublime” technique with emphasis on a hostile, forbidding environment; others such as Frederic Church, Albert Bierstadt and Thomas Moran followed a few decades later, introducing a warmer, more inviting interpretation of the landscape. Canoes or boats, if appearing at all, were minuscule in relation to the surroundings.

Initially, the age of romance had little effect on Canadian authors. To Susanna Moodie, Catharine Parr Traill, Sir John Galt and other anglophone writers of the pioneer era, the frontier or “near north” inspired an image synonymous with hardship and challenge. With the exception of Anna Jameson’s description of her travels on Georgian Bay in the 1830s, rarely was there any mention of the fur trade. A more “picturesque” natural world was described with a focus on the foreground, on the flowers, trees and woodland paths, or, in Gaile McGregor’s words, a “Shaftesbury-Wordsworthian image.”¹⁸ In early French and English settler literature, the wilderness beyond was perceived as fearful and hostile, a perception that gave inspiration and substance to Northrop Frye’s concept of Canadians’ “garrison mentality.” By contrast, a more aesthetic vision was ascribed to the Arctic by the raconteurs of the 19th-century British admiralty explorations, especially those searching for the lost Franklin expedition. With the exception of the four overland attempts, the canoe is singularly absent from these narratives that clearly differentiate the Arctic from the more general term “north.” Here, the kayak belonged to the Inuit; the sailing ships and their longboats belonged to the Europeans.

Meanwhile, a quite different form of northern myth emerged in the years prior to and following Confederation, a national image that inspired Anglo-Canadians to new heights of self-confidence and expectation at a time when patriotic sentiments were at a feverish pitch. From the vision of a nation stretching from sea to sea grew the idea that “Canada’s unique character derived from her northern location, severe winters and heritage of northern races,” a notion that had its roots in a lecture entitled “We are the Northmen of the New World,” given by R.G. Haliburton of the Canada First Movement.¹⁹ For decades, this Darwinian concept became a recurrent theme in Canadian nationalist rhetoric with its attendant promise of future prosperity. Exploited to the fullest in the boosterism of the western expansionist movement, it appeared again as the main thesis in Vilhjalmur Stefansson’s *The Northward Course of Empire* in 1922 and re-emerged with new vigour in the mid-1940s as part of the promotion of a “New North” and in Richard Rohmer’s mid-Canada campaign. It was a popular myth, equally enduring as the aesthetic myth arising from the European Age of Romance, but its goal ultimately demanded destruction of the wilderness so revered by those who dreamed of freedom and adventure. Initially, the inherent contradiction was not readily apparent; to Canadians, the northern wilderness seemed limitless. More importantly, neither the pioneer nor later exploitation myths involved any direct relationship to the canoe.

The last half of the 19th century saw the emergence of new attitudes in the United States. The frontier myth, which viewed land as an object to conquer, was increasingly challenged in the published writings of an urban-based

intellectual community. Just as Canadians had begun to look to their north as a source of future prosperity and identity, “wilderness” was declared a symbol of America’s uniqueness in the western world. From this new perspective, unsettled lands were no longer considered fearful or alien, but rather places of beauty and a psychological counterbalance to the negative aspects of urban life. The works of American philosophers such as Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman added to this interpretation by measuring the value of wilderness in terms of spiritualism and transcendentalism. It was definitely an urban-inspired idealism, arousing little sympathy among the residents of the frontier—a situation somewhat analogous to the resistance of white northerners to the present-day environmental movement.¹⁹

Once this new perception of wilderness gained general acceptance, it was only a matter of time until concern arose for its preservation. By now, the detrimental effects of clear-cut lumbering were increasingly apparent in the eastern forests; thus, it was not surprising that American foresters, naturalists and the intellectual community subsequently joined forces in a campaign to stem the disappearance of natural wild lands. When the American western frontier closed rapidly toward the end of the century, the “conservation” movement gained momentum, as reflected in the founding of the Sierra Club in 1892, with transcendentalist John Muir as president. Efforts to preserve large wilderness areas as national parks were accorded the ultimate in political support when President Theodore Roosevelt adopted an active leadership role in the campaign. In his estimation, the preservation of wilderness was necessary to prevent loss of character and manliness through “over-civilization.” City life, he claimed, would encourage laziness of body and mind.²⁰

Of particular significance was the parallel rise of a wilderness appreciation cult in the United States and the growth of urban-centred canoe clubs in both countries. The Canadian tradition of canoe races began with Indians who were challenged first by the voyageurs, then by early settlers along the St. Lawrence and Ottawa Rivers, reportedly as early as the 1820s.²¹ The canoe became increasingly identified with competition and regattas, first informally in the mid-19th century, then through various rowing clubs before the establishment of canoe clubs in the 1880s. Although American interest in paddling appears to have originated from the adventure concept of a wilderness experience involving camping, fishing and hunting, by the time the American Canoe Association (ACA) was founded in 1880, canoeing had become a highly competitive sport centred around urban boating clubs. The 1883 ACA regatta held on Stoney Lake in the Kawarthas intensified Canadian interest in international competition; it also introduced American canoeists to the lake country north of Toronto.²²

Interest in competitive racing and canoe sailing would gradually diminish, but in the meantime, American paddlers had discovered an ideal wilderness to rejuvenate the body and mind—the Canadian “north.” The advantages of promoting tourism did not go unheeded in Ottawa or the provincial capitals. As a consequence, the Canadian conservation movement was more strongly influenced by the proponents of scientific forestry and tourism than by the wilderness appreciation and preservation aspects of its American counterpart. As such, it was not an intellectual or populist phenomenon, but one led by senior civil servants on behalf of lumber and recreation interests. Geographer J.G. Nelson argues that not only did wilderness appreciation develop earlier in the United States, but in Canada “it seemingly appeared only rarely and then usually in the contained and conservative way typical of Canadian reaction to romantic or aesthetic ideas.”²³ Nevertheless, the “back-to-nature” ideology slowly gained acceptance in Canada in the years prior to World War I, with the canoe heritage of the Canadian Indian forging the link and the impetus.

Meanwhile, in the United States, the wilderness cult had focused on the far north much earlier than most imagined. By 1890, over 5000 American tourists had travelled by steamship to Glacier Bay in Alaska, to enjoy “a wilderness experience.” A number of individuals also ventured into the Canadian far north, some seeking adventure and others hoping to gain scientific knowledge. Several went on personal expeditions, notably Frank Russell and Caspar Whitney, as did British adventure seekers Henry Toke Munn, Warburton Pike and David Hanbury. Following the tradition of the early explorers, these men travelled by canoe and dog sled; they also kept daily journals of their experiences, describing the hardships, the uncommon beauty and the vastness of the landscape, with significantly more emphasis on wilderness appreciation than earlier accounts. In many instances, they were clearly following the “quest pattern” of the polar explorers, which had its origins in the exploits of Prometheus and Jason in Greek mythology.²⁴ Few Canadians set forth, although countless numbers read the published narratives of the British and American adventurers. The canoe was central to these experiences and as such provided subconscious reinforcement of the philosophical rationale behind wilderness camping.

Any suggestion of Canadian apathy towards their north disappeared with the major discovery of gold in the Yukon in 1896. Roderick Nash argues that for the most part, the stampedeers followed the same quest pattern of the northern adventure-seekers in that most “sought the excitement of wilderness rather than gold. They were not frontiersmen, so much as city folks seeking a frontier experience.”²⁵ In contrast to the favoured American route by way of the Alaskan ports of Skagway and Dyea, over the passes and down the Yukon River, many Canadians attempted to follow the canoe routes of the fur trade. Only a handful

were successful in reaching their destination. Meanwhile, the armchair observers were caught up in the magic of the gold quest, so vividly described in all manner of fiction, guidebooks, autobiographies, poetry, art and photography. The image relayed was one of high adventure, intrigue and mystery, challenge and hardship. It also gave substantive evidence to the myth of northern resource wealth, but the role of the canoe was only of secondary importance. Unlike the prospectors in northern Ontario and Quebec, who depended almost entirely on the canoe for travel on the remote rivers and lakes, the high mountain passes and fast flowing rivers of the Yukon generally demanded alternative means to penetrate the deep wilderness.

The resulting Klondike literature placed the Yukon on the world map, notably through the immortal works of Jack London and Robert Service. The latter, a young bank clerk from Scotland, was particularly adept in describing the distinctive lure and magic of the northern wilderness in his immortal "The Spell of the Yukon."

There's gold and it's haunting and haunting;
It's luring me on as of old;
Yet it isn't the gold that I'm wanting
So much as just finding the gold.
It's the great, big broad land 'way up yonder,
It's the forests where silence has lease;
It's the beauty that fills me with wonder,
It's the stillness that fills me with peace.²⁶

In these few lines, Service captured the magnetism, quest, grandeur, isolation and awesome spiritual quality of the northern wilderness. Rejecting the exploitation myth in favour of a philosophical explanation, he claimed it was the image of adventure and challenge in the land beyond, not the gold, that lured the masses to the Klondike. Further clues to the origin of his beliefs may be found in *Ploughman of the Moon*, which tells of his own canoe trip up the Rat River in the Northwest Territories, then down the Bell and Porcupine Rivers to the mighty Yukon.

After the gold rush subsided, only a few adventure-seekers continued to travel to the far north by canoe in search of excitement and fulfilment, but those who did still wrote and published narratives; many conducted lecture tours; a few admitted to being motivated by the Arctic adventure stories read in their youth. Most experienced an emotional disorientation when re-entering the civilized world; as described by George Douglas after returning from two years in the Barrens, "the times had changed, the change in ourselves had no reference to them but made conformity to established usages more than ever, difficult."²⁷ Just as the escapades of the *coureurs de bois* represented a refuge from the regulated

society of New France, a wilderness adventure was now clearly identified as an escape from urban society.

By the 1920s, American books and journals extolling the values of a wilderness experience had found their way into most Canadian homes. The “nature writers” had a definite purpose, described by one author as a means of encouraging discovery of “some beautiful and forgotten part of ... man’s own soul.”²⁸ For Americans, wilderness could be found in pockets throughout their land, in New Mexico, northern California, New England and the Everglades, but the canoe tradition figured most strongly in the northeastern states, as well as northern Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota. In Canada, with the possible exception of the Maritimes, wilderness meant “north” of everywhere. In Gaile McGregor’s view, “Canadians embraced enthusiastically a romantic cult of primitivistic wilderness worship” that, over time, created a deeply ingrained environmental perspective which “still exerts a disproportionate influence on Canadian thinking.”²⁹

Following in step with American trends, a number of Canadian authors adopted a similar emphasis on nature and wildlife. Adventures in wilderness settings quickly gained popularity: the works of P.G. Downes, Arthur Heming and Grey Owl, as well as the unique wild animal stories of C.G.D. Roberts and Ernest Thompson Seton. Canadian magazines continued to carry articles describing various wilderness experiences, most accompanied by illustrations or photographs. Advertisements increasingly used pictures of wildlife, canoes, lakes, rocks and pine trees to promote various commercial products or services. Growing popularity of the wilderness ideal also provided the impetus for C.W. Jefferys, Tom Thomson, Emily Carr, and the Group of Seven artists to portray their images of mountains, trees and water as symbols of Canadian nationalism: many set out by canoe to seek new sources of inspiration. The drowning of Thomson while paddling on Canoe Lake was tragic, yet ironically symbolic of the links between the artists, the canoe and the north.

For many Canadians, the wilderness was more than a mental image, since with minimal effort, one could experience it first-hand in the “near north.” American money built three-storey summer hotels, rustic lodges, fishing camps and cottages in the Ontario and Quebec lake country. Canadians followed on their heels, to the Laurentians, the Muskokas, the Kawarthas, Temagami, along Georgian Bay and on through the Lake of the Woods region to the Rockies. The ability to paddle a canoe was considered essential to enjoy a northern vacation, and wilderness canoe tripping inevitably became the ultimate experience in understanding the meaning of Canada. A 1915 article in *Rod and Gun* expressed the sentiment eloquently:

There is a secret influence at work in the wild places of the North that seems to cast a spell over the men who have once been in them. One can never forget the lakes of such wonderful beauty, the rivers, peaceful or turbulent, and the quiet portage paths, or the mighty forest of real trees. It is really getting to know Canada, to go where these things are. After having made camps along the water routes, one feels a proud sense of ownership of that part of the country, which must develop into a deeper feeling of patriotism in regard to the whole land.³⁰

By this time, the romantic image of “north” had spread into every aspect of the Canadian culture, in much the same way as the appreciation of wilderness was absorbed earlier into the American ethos. Youth camps for both the wealthy and less privileged sprang up in the lake country, providing an opportunity to learn the necessary prerequisites for a wilderness experience: swimming, canoeing, woodcraft and survival techniques.³¹ The campers also learned the ways of the Indian, his respect for nature, his legends and rites. New national and provincial parks were created while politicians began to talk more earnestly of the need to preserve wildlife. The message was carried throughout Canada and the United States, in school textbooks, by the Boy Scouts and the YMCA (Young Men’s Christian Association), in novels, sermons, hymns and art.

An example of the fervour and moral conviction behind the ideology is found in the 1918 edition of *The Tuxis Boys’ Manual*. The purpose of the canoe trip was not simply to develop a strong physique and moral character but to see and understand the true meaning of Canada. A “camp log” written by John D. Spence outlined some of the potential benefits:

A brief return to the crudeness of nature; a brief renunciation of the artificiality of business and social life; a brief enjoyment of skies and lakes and rocks and pine trees at their freshest and best. Then, with firmer grip and steadier purpose, back to the work or the waiting, back to the rush and the bustle of the city, to brush shoulders with our fellows in whom we approve the good and censure the selfishness with greater charity because we have been ourselves brought nearer to the trust and truthfulness of our childhood.³²

Significantly, the conscientious effort to educate the younger generation on the value of Canada’s north was derived from convictions already held by an adult intellectual elite. To have experienced a wilderness canoe trip was the mark of an educated and enlightened gentleman.

Perhaps at no other time do we find the romantic image of the north so closely related to the canoe as in the popular literature, poems and camping songs originating in those years, be it Pauline Johnson’s “The Song My Paddle Sings,” George Marsh’s “The Old Canoe” or the venerable “Land of the Silver Birch.”

Perhaps maudlin by present-day standards, "To the North," appearing in *The University of Toronto Songbook*, seems to sum it all up:

Nor South, nor East, nor golden West,
Can match the Northland's rugged pride,
The North, the hardy North's the best!
To the North, to the North we go!
To the North, where the pine trees grow.

Then it's ho! for the gleaming paddle;
And it's ho! for the line and rod,
And the rushing fall, and the pine trees tall,
And the waters bright and broad,
To the North, to the North we go!
To the North, where the pine trees grow.

During the interwar years, there was no question that the northland and the canoe belonged together in the minds of many Canadians. Still, although the canoe might conjure up images of north, the reverse appeared to be less true.

The Great War appeared to have a sobering effect on those dreams of untold wealth awaiting Canadians in their northern wilderness. Although veteran prospectors still ventured forth, new mining technology and the use of the bush plane gave an added advantage to company ventures backed by greater financial resources. Even the discovery of gold on the shores of Great Slave Lake in 1937 failed to rekindle the enthusiasm of the Klondike years. In the cynical opinion of one long-time resident of Yellowknife, "the Dawson rush was like the careering gallop of a wild unbroken stallion, and the Yellowknife rush, like the plodding of a cart horse."³³ Many still sought instant riches, but the stock market of the 1920s provided more promising prospects with seemingly less risk and minimal physical effort. When it crashed in the fall of 1929, most Canadians sought stability and security. Canoe trips offered a relatively inexpensive vacation, but only a privileged few could afford extensive time away from work if they were lucky enough to be employed. By the nature of their professions, schoolteachers and senior academics were among the more fortunate. Meanwhile, bush planes increased their penetration into the far north, making access less of a challenge and the experience less unique. The wilderness quality of the near north slowly diminished, helped along by a growing American market for the Canadian tourist industry.

Still, many Canadians continued to view the canoeing experience as a link to their land and heritage. As Canadian historian A.R.M. Lower observed after a canoe trip to James Bay,

... only those who have had the experience can know what a sense of physical and spiritual excitement comes to one who turns his face away

from men towards the unknown. In his small way he is doing what the great explorers have done before him, and his elation recaptures theirs.³⁴

As such, the canoe trip was more than a holiday; it was a pursuit of one's heritage and so became a popular pastime among the more intellectually oriented.

By the Second World War, the far north was still a subject of curiosity, celebrated as an intangible influence on the nation's character—"the true north, strong and free." The bombing of Pearl Harbor, however, transformed the far-off romantic image into one of stark reality. Apart from new strategic significance, the prolific wartime activities associated with the building of the Alaska Highway, the Canol Pipeline, airfields and weather stations aroused serious concerns about sovereignty and previous government neglect. Pressures from influential civil servants and private citizens for major changes in social and economic policies verged on jingoism. The message was also contradictory when repeated references to "a new north," the land of opportunity or the "opening of the northern frontier" were combined with the suggestion that the lure of the north represented "something inherent in the human heart and the human soul which responds to the appeal of wilderness."³⁵ One of the more stirring speeches referred to "the frontier as a bastion of freedom, and the North as a permanent frontier."³⁶ This image of north was truly a nation-building myth based on advances in aviation technology and potential resource development. Despite the many references to wilderness, there was no place for the canoe in this vision of the future.

Changes in perceptions of the north were inevitable. Other interests such as tennis, water skiing, sailboarding and computer science began to replace the traditional emphasis on nature crafts and canoeing at summer youth camps. In the near north, modern technology brought new roads, high-speed motorboats, hydro, television and the telephone. With increasing urbanization, the natural world retreated further and further north. The various myths of the north, and the canoe as an instrument of its appreciation, appeared to have diminished importance in the modern world of nuclear arms and satellite communications, until the ecological and psychological value of wilderness once again found a receptive audience during the environmental movement of the 1970s, this time in direct conflict with the resource exploitation goals of the nation-building ideology that threatened the destruction of the northern wilderness. As a consequence, the canoe, which still represents the wilderness ideal of north, might also be considered an "anti-symbol" of the progress-oriented myths. No longer essential to would-be exploiters, it is now the preferred vehicle of the preservationists who oppose major development in a manner ironically similar to that of the *coureurs de bois* centuries earlier.

In each myth, the north is measured in terms of value. Overriding all variants is the “core” myth, with an enduring quality that suggests that the vast wilderness regions continue to impart a distinct character to the Canadian people and their institutions. The centrality of the canoe in the romantic image of a wilderness north is undeniable, yet perhaps less celebrated now than other symbols, owing to the contradictions in the myths. Still, for Canadians, the canoe stands today as a proud symbol of the freedom, adventure, exhilaration and tranquility to be found in the wilderness areas of northern Canada.

Notes

¹ Walden, K. *Visions of Order: The Canadian Mounties in Symbol and Myth*.

Toronto: Butterworths, 1982, 116 & 8-12. Walden has derived his premise from the works of Claude Lévi-Strauss and other eminent scholars who have attempted to identify the role of myths in the modern world.

² Roberts, K.G. and Shackleton, P. *The Canoe: A History of the Craft from Panama to the Arctic*. Toronto: Macmillan, 1983, 1-2.

³ Hamelin, L. *Canadian Nordicity: It's Your North, Too* (English edition). Montreal: Harvest House, 1978, 15-46.

⁴ Brody, H. *Maps and Dreams: Indians and the British Columbia Frontier*. Markham: Pelican Books, 1983, 57.

⁵ Hodgins, B. and Hobbs, M. (eds.) *Nastawgan: The Canadian North by Canoe & Snowshoe*. Toronto: Betelgeuse Books, 1985, 1.

⁶ Morton, W.L. *The Canadian Identity*, (2nd edition). Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972, 93; and Morton, W.L. “The ‘North’ in Canadian Historiography,” *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, Series IV, Volume VIII (1970), 40.

⁷ Berger, C. “The True North, Strong and Free...” in Peter Russell (ed.), *Nationalism in Canada*. Toronto: McGraw Hill Ryerson, 1966, 5.

⁸ Page, R. *Northern Development: The Canadian Dilemma*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986, 2 & 23.

⁹ Hodgins, B. “The Canadian North: Conflicting Images, Conflicting Historiography.” Unpublished paper, Trent University, 1980.

¹⁰ Franks, C.E.S. *The Canoe and White Water: From Essential to Sport*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977, 56-7.

¹¹ Bruemmer, F. *The Arctic*. New York: Quadrangle, 1974, 208.

¹² The words of George Blondin, as quoted in *Denendeh: A Dene Celebration*. Yellowknife, NWT: The Dene Association, 1984, 93.

¹³ Franks, 8.

¹⁴ Roberts and Shackleton, 201.

- ¹⁵ As quoted by R.M. Ballantyne, *Hudson Bay*, London, 1879, in E.W. Morse, *Fur Trade Canoe Routes of Canada/Then and Now*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2nd edition, reprint 1984, 110.
- ¹⁶ Fowke, E. *Folk Tales of French Canada*. Toronto: NC Press, 1982, 77, 116-24.
- ¹⁷ Grant, J. in C. Grant (ed.), *Touch the Pioneers*. Waterloo: Waterloo Music Company, 1984, 28-9.
- ¹⁸ McGregor, G. *The Wacousta Syndrome: Explorations in the Canadian Landscape*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985, 42.
- ¹⁹ Berger, "True North, Strong and Free..." 5. Also see Berger, C. *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970.
- ²⁰ Nash, R. *Wilderness and the American Mind*, (3rd edition). New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982, 65-117.
- ²¹ Cole, J. "Kawartha Lake Regattas," in Hodgins and Hobbs, 203-10.
- ²² For a more detailed account of the development of canoe sport, see the essay by Fred Johnston in *Canexus: The Canoe in Canadian Culture*, eds. James Raffan and Bert Horwood (Toronto: Betelgeuse, 1988).
- ²³ Nelson, J.G. "Canada's National Parks: Past, Present and Future," 43-5; also Morrison, K. "The Evolution of the Ontario Provincial Park System," 102-7; both in G. Wall and J.S. Marsh (eds.), *Recreational Land Use: Perspectives on its Evolution in Canada*. Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1982.
- ²⁴ James, W.C. "The Quest Pattern and the Canoe Trip," in Hodgins and Hobbs, 9-10.
- ²⁵ Nash, 284-5.
- ²⁶ Service, R. *The Best of Robert Service*. Toronto: McGraw-Hill-Ryerson, 1963, 1-3.
- ²⁷ Douglas, G.M. *Lands Forlorn: A Story of an Expedition to Hearne's Coppermine River*. New York: 1914, 270.
- ²⁸ Long, W.J. *Northern Trails*. Boston: Ginn, 1905, 217.
- ²⁹ McGregor, 51-52. The author also emphasizes that both British and American literature in Canadian homes far outweighed the presence of Canadian works, well into the mid-20th century. 55.
- ³⁰ Bocking, W.R. "A Canoe Trip," *Rod and Gun* 12(6), 1915, 6. As quoted in J. Benidickson, "Paddling for Pleasure: Recreational Canoeing as a Canadian Way of Life," in Wall and Marsh, 325.
- ³¹ Back, B. *The Keewaydin Way: A Portrait: 1893-1983*. Temagami, Ont.: Keewaydin Camp, 1983.
- ³² *Tuxis Boys' Manual for Older Boys*. Canada Young Men's Christian Association, 1918, 189-91.
- ³³ Price, R. *Yellowknife*. Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1967, 117.
- ³⁴ Lower, A.R.M. *Unconventional Voyages*. Toronto: Ryerson, 1953, 24.
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- ³⁶ Keenleyside, H. "Recent Developments in the Canadian North," speech delivered at McMaster Convocation, May 1949.

3

Myths of the North in the Canadian Ethos

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Since the time of Confederation, many Canadians have looked upon their north as a symbol of identity and destiny. Often referred to collectively as the “myth of the north,” differing perceptions of the northern wilderness have caused succeeding generations to attach special meaning to the idea of north in relation to national identity. Although most scholars acknowledge the existence of this ideological concept, there are a variety of interpretations as to the origins, makeup and impact of the composite myth. Some claim that there are innate cultural and philosophical roots; others point to European influences during the period of discovery and early colonization; many emphasize geographical and economic factors. Yet regardless of whether these beliefs are endemic or merely adaptations of those held by other societies and cultures, most Canadians believe that the north has somehow imparted a unique quality to the character of the nation. To fully understand the basis of this ideological premise, one must first identify the many lesser myths that gave special meaning to the north and eventually combined to form the vague but all-encompassing core myth.

There are a number of definitions that may be applied to the word “myth.” Many believe it to be the antithesis of reality, something imaginary. According to the Oxford dictionary, it is a traditional narrative, embodying popular ideas on natural or social phenomena. By Webster’s definition, it may be a story or collection of stories, ostensibly with a historical basis, that serves to explain some phenomenon of nature or the customs and institutions of a people. Although these definitions imply that a myth is a perception rather than a fact, one Canadian historian recently put forward a convincing argument that fact and interpretation cannot exist independently, that myths are merely “attempts to depict a reality which is not easy to grasp,” an inevitable result of man’s efforts “to make sense of the world.” This premise was derived from the works of Claude Lévi-Strauss and other eminent scholars who have attempted to identify the role

of myths in the modern world.¹ In essence, a myth can be any story, image or notion that explains something. For Canadians, the “myth of the north” explains how the north has affected the nation’s identity and ethos.

From a different perspective, Robert Bringhurst argues that over the years, the word “myth” has acquired two meanings diametrically opposed to each other: the one being an ageless truth, the other, a persistent lie.² Yet regardless of whether a myth is based on accepted fact or presumed fiction, it is in itself an interpretation derived from an individual’s knowledge or bias. More simply, one person’s “truth” may, in another’s opinion, be a “lie”. Thus, even if a minority view, a respectable consensus may be sufficient to sustain a myth. However, when two or more are combined to support a broader myth, then the contradictions in the originals will be incorporated into the rationale of the new.

Every society has its own set of myths to explain its origins and character, and while there may be personal connotations to perception and interpretation, it is often the collectivity of similar attitudes that gives a myth credence and strength. The universality of its acceptance may be measured by the degree to which the myth has been incorporated into a nation’s cultural framework, as reflected in folk songs and ballads, poetry and prose, art, theatre and dance. Although Canada’s pronounced regionalism complicates such assessment, most historians agree that various myths of the north have had, and probably still have, a significant impact on national identity. Just as myths the world over have provided explanations to direct the conscience and understanding of society, so have the myths of the north impacted the Canadian ethos.

The definition of “north” must also be clarified. In Canada, the term is generally considered in a much broader context than the politically defined Yukon and Northwest Territories, for it is equally applicable to Labrador, northern British Columbia, Quebec, and Ontario, as well as the more remote areas of the prairie provinces. Louis-Edmond Hamelin described the concept of “nordicity” as measured by such factors as physical geography, climate, vegetation, isolation, population density and economic activity.³ Thus, in Canada, the north is often referred to as “wilderness,” a place beyond southern civilization, agricultural settlement or urban life. And in terms of size, it is massive. By Hamelin’s definition, 70 per cent of Canada’s lands and waters are in the north or mid-north.⁴ Hugh Brody, on the other hand, refers to the gradual expansion of the agricultural frontier, with the north on “the other side of the conveniently sliding divide. The ‘real’ north keeps moving north, but never ceases to exist.”⁵ By either definition, the scattered “pocket frontiers” of resource development are “in the north” rather than adjacent to it. Yet the north can also be merely a “state of mind,” directly related to one’s own experience.

In recent decades, historians have begun to seriously probe the meaning of north in the nation's psyche. Initially, W. L. Morton described the Canadian Shield as an immense heartland affecting the character of the people, their mode of living and the economy upon which they would depend.⁶ Later, he declared that "the comprehensive meaning of Canadian history is to be found where there has been no Canadian history, in the North."⁷ Carl Berger claimed that the influence of the north on Canadian perceptions of identity was derived from the Anglo-Saxon myth that promised future prosperity to a northern country populated with people of northern races.⁸ More recently, Robert Page wrote that southern attitudes towards the north were a combination of a romantic vision "deeply implanted in the national consciousness" and one of "greed and economic exploitation," and that even today, Canadians have retained "much of the traditional mythology, including its basic split between development goals and idealism."⁹ Conflicting images of north have persisted, causing confusion and debate as to the degree of influence and meaning,¹⁰ but most concede that Canada's north has inspired a sense of national unity by creating a unique identity in an American-dominated continent.

Most northern myths were based on images of land and climate that varied according to the cultural traditions of the observers. With qualification owing to overlap, several categories arise: the aesthetic and philosophical images, the frontier or nation-building myths and the "north as homeland." Over time, European and American perspectives were adapted and integrated into a more truly Canadian outlook: often vague, at times contradictory and further fragmented by the north's own regionalism. Each of these myths saw the north as a distinct entity, a place beyond the lands settled by the French, British, Americans and Canadians. Most were rooted in first-hand experience, then moulded by idealism, regionalism and the cultural baggage of new immigrants, until they were finally transmitted to future generations through literature, music and art. The myths were often concurrent, some coalesced. All have been cited as part of "our northern heritage," an amorphous, obscure, yet recurrent theme in Canadian nationalism. When viewed as a whole, the "myth of the north" is full of contradictions; when considered in its parts, it has been a source of celebration, pride and promise.

Perhaps the oldest and most enduring perception of the north is one shared by the indigenous peoples long before Europeans set foot on the shores of the western hemisphere. There are many cultures and sub-cultures among the Indian and Inuit of northern Canada, but they share similar attitudes towards the land, derived in part from the long experience of survival in what many southerners consider a hostile environment. The image of the north as a "homeland" is essentially a southern expression for the intensely spiritual concept of land held

by northern natives. To the Inuit, it is called *Nunatsiaq*, meaning the beautiful land. Fred Bruemmer, who has lived and travelled extensively in the Arctic, describes the deeper meaning of *Nunatsiaq*:

He (an Inuk) was a part of it; it brought him sorrow and it brought him joy, and he lived in harmony with it and its demands, accepting fatalistically, its hardships, exulting in its bounty and beauty.¹¹

Prior to European contact, everything within the Inuit's natural world had a spiritual connotation, a sanctity that must be respected. The infinite space and majestic grandeur of the Arctic "gave northern man a special awe for the might and mystery of the world, impressed upon him his own insignificance, and made him both mystically-inclined and humble." This feeling of impotence was also the basis for the Inuit's belief in shamans to act as "intermediaries between the world of man and the world of the spirits." Any life form or inanimate object that had a sense of permanency was thought to have had a spirit or soul, a belief that explains his profound respect for nature.¹² He was not a separate entity arriving on earth; he was always there, at one with and a part of the natural world.

The Dene Indians of the Northwest Territories have similar beliefs, perhaps more estranged due to a more prolonged and intensive contact with western man. Significantly, there is no word for wilderness in the Athapaskan dialects. Wherever they travelled, it was simply "home." In the words of one Dene, the land represented "the very spirit of the Dene way of life. From the land came our religion ... from the land came our life ... from the land came our powerful medicine ... from the land came our way of life."¹³ There was also a strong mother image attached to the land and waters, which fed and protected them from adversity. To the Aborigines of the north, their land was never "owned" in the sense of western man. It was always there. Only with the intrusion of strangers who did not understand the bond between man and nature was there a disorientation in the symbiotic balance between humans, animals, plant life and the earth. There was never an idea of frontier or imperial design. The land belonged to the Creator, and in the Dene expression, it was only borrowed for their children's children.¹⁴

The first European observations of North America understandably were coloured by national ambitions. For the French in the early 17th century, the prospect of territorial expansion and trade potential was further enhanced by belief in a "divine mission" to expand Catholic society throughout the world. Most journal entries of this period described vast inhospitable lands inhabited by savages. By the mid-1700s, however, the missionary zeal had all but disappeared, and the fur trade became more important as a means of staking claim to a region than for its economic value to France.¹⁵ By contrast, British interest in the far north was inspired initially by its commercial potential: at first, related to the

search for a direct route to the riches of the Orient, and later, because of the profitable exploitation of fur, maritime and mineral resources in and around the "Great Bay of the North." Thus, when the Hudson's Bay Company was granted a charter in 1670, it was to prevent unnecessary competition in the fur trade, not in expectation that the region had any settlement potential. As described in a recent account, "from the very outset, the whole business of the Company was business, not the dissemination of the British way of life or the proclamation of the gospel of Christ."¹⁶

During the 18th century, both Britain and France anticipated economic benefits from increased mercantile trade with [North America]. The British in particular were committed to imperial expansion, as reflected in Bishop Berkeley's famous line of 1752, "westward the course of Empire takes its way."¹⁷ Yet most Europeans still perceived the sub-Arctic and Arctic as a cold, mysterious and alien land inhabited by strange and primitive people. Published journals of the early British polar explorers tended to be factual accounts of access routes, weather conditions and potential resources. The French appeared more interested in overland explorations, especially after reports of British intrusion into the interior. Yet the far north inspired little interest when there were still profits to be made from a lucrative fur trade in the near north. In New France, the songs and tales of *coureurs de bois* conjured up an exciting image of the wilderness compared to the staid reports of Catholic priests. These recalcitrant entrepreneurs were considered of questionable character, despised by the missionaries and distrusted by government officials, but they also represented adventure and challenge. As a result, the colonists acquired conflicting notions about the *pays d'en haut*: the image of a resource-rich but remote, hostile and godless wilderness, yet at the same time symbolic of excitement and freedom, a place where one could escape from the regulated society of the French regime and make a fortune in furs. The Hudson's Bay Company was content to report only profits and expansion plans. Agricultural settlement in Rupert's Land was discouraged lest it destroy the wilderness upon which the fur trade depended.

Following the Conquest, the *voyageurs* hired by the Nor'Westers gave further credence to established fur trade myths. These men toiled endlessly without complaint, proud of their strength and skill, joyous of their freedom and relative independence. Following the amalgamation of the two major rivals, the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company, in 1821, the term "voyageur" was commonly used to describe most participants in the fur trade, portraying a romantic image similar to that of the *coureurs de bois*, "living lives of perilous adventure, gruelling labour and boisterous camaraderie." As a result, the *voyageur* and his canoe became fully integrated into both English and French versions of our cultural heritage and an integral part of the romantic image of the north.

Much of our present knowledge of the fur trade's history has come by way of the day books and diaries of fur traders. Their attention to detail and the desire to relate their impressions and emotional experiences have provided succeeding generations of writers and scholars with an authentic mirror on the past. An almost magical connotation was attributed to the *voyageurs* by a former Hudson's Bay employee who described the thrill of hearing "the wild romantic song" and seeing a brigade of twenty or more canoes rounding a promontory, "half shrouded in the spray that flew from the bright vermilion paddles."¹⁸

Visual images of the northern fur trade have also been faithfully preserved in the dramatic paintings of John Halkett, Frances [Anne] Hopkins, Arthur Heming and others. Similarly, many French-Canadian folktales focused on the tragedies or heroic feats encountered in the north. While the characters and details were original, many plots were adaptations of European fables. The tale of the "Chasse-Galerie" is a classic example, based on the threat of eternal damnation for having sold one's soul to the devil. One French-Canadian version describes a flying canoe as having transported lonely men from a remote northern lumber camp to their loved ones in Montreal. Alas, the canoe was sterned by none other than the devil himself, and its eager occupants paid dearly for their escape from the fearful isolation of the northern wilderness.¹⁹ The *voyageur* songs, on the other hand, were quite original. Singing and chanting in time to the dip of the paddles were means of keeping a steady pace and relieving the monotony of long stretches of lake travel. Yet the message would vary to fit the mood or occasion, sometimes reinforcing the paddlers' quest for freedom and adventure, while ridiculing the life left behind; on the return voyage, there would more likely be nostalgic reminders of those back home. Among the favourites were "En Roulant ma Boule," "C'est L'Aviron" and "Youpe Youpe sur la Rivière."²⁰ Thus, in folktales, art and music, an image of the northern wilderness has been indelibly linked to freedom, adventure and challenge.

Ironically, in the early 1800s, the *voyageur* legends had seemingly little effect on the better-educated French Canadians, who were perhaps too preoccupied with re-orienting their own society and politics to be overly concerned with images of the north. But they were kept alive in the near north—the Laurentians, Lac Saint-Jean, Rimouski, and the upper Ottawa valley—where isolated lumber camps offered employment to sons of the poorer habitants. Here, the tales and songs of the *coureur de bois* and *voyageur* were added to those of the *forestier* to help while away the long winter nights. The myths that emerged were neither elitist nor intellectual; they were simply perceptions of common folk, passed on in the oral tradition. French-Canadian literature, on the other hand, increasingly focused on the agrarian myth and the "civilizing mission," no doubt influenced

by a growing sense of Quebec nationalism and the dominance of the Catholic Church.²¹

Following Confederation, French-Canadian politicians and the Catholic hierarchy were only moderately successful in promoting settlement in northern Quebec with their promise that “*notre ouest c’est le nord*.” On the other hand, efforts by mission priests to attract French-speaking settlers to the Northwest were in most cases a dismal failure. The hope that the French nation could be extended northward and westward was a product of an elitist imagination and not one shared by the vast majority, who found little appeal in the idea of an alien land, remote from family and friends.²² Accepting the agrarian myth as the ideological basis for a predominantly rural society, most viewed the near north as a frontier that must be tamed or conquered; the far north attracted only the foolhardy and most daring.²³ As Jack Warwick explained in *The Long Journey*, “the *pays d’en haut* at their best are a state of mind into which the boldest spirits can run to seek their self-completion.”²⁴

While it is clearly evident that the fur trade created one of the first romantic images of the north, there were other myths emerging that would be equally significant. By the early 19th century, the political and industrial revolutions in Europe gave birth to changes in social and intellectual ideas. In Britain, the Age of Romanticism was accompanied by an increasing fascination with the relationship of mankind to the natural environment. It was the era of Wordsworth and Byron, of Turner and Constable, and other writers, poets and artists who began to express their perceptions in terms of either the “sublime,” which accentuated the mystery and grandeur of nature, or the “picturesque,” which denoted a more harmonious relationship between man and nature.²⁵ Thus, when British explorers brought home their first-hand observations of North America, they were re-interpreted and refined by the old-world intellectual community. By the 1830s, American painters such as Thomas Cole began to use the “sublime” technique, but with emphasis on a hostile, forbidding environment; others including Frederic Church, Albert Bierstadt and Thomas Moran followed a few decades later, introducing a warmer, more inviting interpretation of the landscape. The aesthetic image of wilderness was primarily the perception of an educated elite, preserved, imported and passed down to succeeding generations of Canadians through countless books and paintings.

In Victorian England, the published journals of fur traders and polar explorers were read by countless youths thirsting for excitement and adventure. By the late 18th and early 19th centuries, both the “sublime” and the “picturesque” were frequently deployed to give colour and depth to the author’s descriptive passages. Alexander Henry, an American-born Nor’Wester, used the former technique when he compared a rockslide in the Northwest to “the scene for the warfare of

the Titans, or for that of Milton's angels."²⁶ By contrast, Alexander Mackenzie described the northern wilderness in more pastoral terms:

I beheld my people, diminished, as it were to half their size, employed in pitching their tents in a charming meadow, and among the canoes, which, being turned upon their sides, presented their reddened bottoms in contrast with the surrounding verdure.²⁷

The educated English of Upper and Lower Canada also began to write of the northern wilderness: Anna Jameson, Sir John Galt, Major John Richardson, Susanna Moodie and Catharine Parr Traill, among others. But the pioneer image of "north" was usually that of a near north, an image synonymous with hardship and challenge that bore little resemblance to the descriptions of explorers who were awestruck by the immenseness of the landscape. Termed by Gaile McGregor a "Shaftesbury-Wordsworthian image," nature was described with a focus on the foreground, on the flowers, trees and woodland paths.²⁸ In most cases, the wilderness beyond was perceived as fearful and hostile, a perception that gave inspiration and substance to Northrop Frye's concept of the "garrison mentality." For most settlers, the polar regions were still very much a place of the imagination, known only to whalers and explorers.

Although the whalers from New England and Scotland had penetrated into Davis Strait by the mid-1700s, the arctic islands themselves were considered of little value, merely an annoying obstacle in the pursuit of a shorter route to the Orient. Only after Napoleon's defeat and exile did the British Admiralty begin a serious assault on the Arctic. The leaders of these expeditions were seasoned veterans of the Royal Navy; some had been knighted for bravery in sea battle; most were well educated and of upper-class birth; many possessed exceptional literary talents; and a surprising number were naturalists: zoologists, geologists, botanists, ornithologists and ichthyologists, all rolled into one. Many of their journals were published, recording in detail their observations and fascination with the Arctic. Attention to the particular in describing the unfamiliar was at times almost obsessive, as exemplified in the diaries of Midshipman Robert Hood, in which he described his personal views of the Indians and Inuit, the finite details of plants and wildlife, as well as the solitude, mystery and magnitude of the wilderness landscape.²⁹ The eloquent introspection of Hood and others marked the beginning of a more subjective analytical approach in arctic narratives. According to I. S. MacLaren, a professor of English at the University of Alberta, "the discovery of the North entailed a ... process of identification that combined human expectation and fact, illusion and empirical reality."³⁰

From 1845 onward, the disappearance of the Franklin expedition added a further dimension to the mystery of the Arctic. Joining the British Admiralty in the search were Danes, Germans and Americans, all publishing accounts of their

adventures.³¹ Most employed the “sublime” to its outermost limits. Icebergs grew to gigantic proportions, spewing forth unimaginable colour and sparkle, as did the land and sea. The impression was multi-dimensional. Some authors added even greater depth and colour through expression of their own emotion, as illustrated by the writings of Joseph René Bellot, who asked “what pen could describe the thousand sensations experienced by the intellect and heart?”³² Similarly awestruck, American Elisha Kent Kane wrote of the Arctic as “more dream-like and supernatural than any combination of earthly features.... It is a landscape such as Milton or Dante might imagine—inorganic, desolate, mysterious.”³³ Others, too numerous to mention, repeated the same message to generations of readers in Europe and North America who relived the experiences and impressions of the Franklin searchers, as if time had wrought no change, as if the frozen wilderness were eternal, forever unaffected by technology or industry. This was indeed a north of the mind, representing challenge, adventure, mystery, enchantment, escape and solitude.

Long after the Franklin mystery was solved, the magnetic quality of an arctic experience continued to fascinate even the explorers. Hardships were soon forgotten, and detailed plans for their return were often made well before the journey home. As the leader of the Wellman Polar Expedition explained, “the glamour of the Arctics [sic] is cast over every man who visits the region of eternal ice and snow.”³⁴ In attempting to explain their inner emotions, polar travellers of the 19th century effectively transformed the north from a geographical location into an emotional experience. The Arctic became the “Ultima Thule.”

As the later arctic explorations became increasingly more scientific oriented, journal entries were more instructive and less subjective. Soon there were few mysteries to solve: the North Pole had been reached and the Northwest Passage navigated. Yet the Arctic myth born of British adventure and intellect endured, even though its impact on Canadians was not readily apparent until the nationalist writers and painters of the 20th century began to probe the relationship of mind and place in the search for a unique Canadian identity.

By the 1870s, another myth of the north emerged, one that inspired Anglo-Canadians to new heights of self-confidence and expectation. In the exuberance and celebration of Confederation, patriotic sentiments inspired by the visions of George Brown and John A. Macdonald ran high among Canadians. From the image of a nation stretching from sea to sea grew the idea “that Canada’s unique character derived from her northern location, severe winters and heritage of ‘northern races’.”³⁵ Although the concept was not entirely without precedent, this myth appears to have its roots in a lecture entitled “We are the Northmen of the New World” delivered in 1869 by R. G. Haliburton, who was one of the original founders of the Canada First Movement. The Social Darwinian concept

was adopted and vigorously promoted by the Canada Firsters in hopes of inspiring national unity. Eventually, it became a recurrent theme in Canadian nationalist rhetoric. Exploited fully in the boosterism of the western expansionist movement, it appeared again as the main thesis in Vilhjalmur Stefansson's *The Northward Course of Empire* in 1922, re-emerged with new vigour in the mid-1940s as part of a campaign to develop a "New North," and was alluded to in Prime Minister Diefenbaker's 1958 "Visions of the North" and later in Richard Rohmer's Mid-Canada campaign.³⁶ It was an enduring myth, as was the aesthetic myth of British origin. It was also shamelessly exploited for political purposes, when the original concept was translated into a promise of more immediate prosperity through exploitation of northern resources.

The resource myth was deployed to its fullest in the political propaganda of the western nation-builders. Douglas Owram's study of the expansionist movement concluded that prior to 1900, most Manitobans sought accelerated settlement and development as a vehicle for provincial and regional imperialism, rather than national benefit. Rapid settlement of the Northwest was considered crucial to the dream of Canada becoming the "Britain of the Western World" described in Alexander Morris's *Nova Britannia* published in 1858. Yet the architects of western expansion also incorporated a distinct northern focus into their plans to build a major railway connecting Winnipeg to the shores of Hudson Bay. Although the railway promoters stressed the economic advantage to be gained by all Canadians through the exploitation of northern resources, underlying the political rhetoric was the dream that Winnipeg would become the commercial capital of Canada.³⁷

The promotion of northern development was serious business, as seen in the 580-page, gilt-edged, leather-bound volume entitled *Our North Land*, written in 1885 by Charles Tuttle, a prominent member of the western expansionist movement. Based on his experience when he accompanied a government scientific expedition to Hudson Bay, he described the region in minute detail, emphasizing the bountiful resources and the more positive aspects of Arctic topography, the climate and the indigenous people. The concept of a "north-westerly course of civilization" emerges in the first chapter, titled "Attraction of the North." This theme is repeated and expanded to the point of arrogance, with such statements as "the greatest deeds have always been accomplished in high latitudes, because the highest latitudes produce the greatest men."³⁸ Moreover, the reader is continually reminded that exploitation of the north is merely a small part of the nation's great destiny. At one point, Tuttle set down what might best be described as a Canadian nationalist marching song:

Mankind, in all ages, in marching along

The highway of commerce, by mighty and strong

Impulse of progress, invariably throng
A course that leads north-westerly.

'Twas true of the Norseman; 'twas true of the Dane;
'Twas true of the Norman, and the Phoenician,
Also of the Saxon, who came to remain,
With England's gay festivity.

'Twas true of the Pilgrims who built Bunker Hill
And 'tis true of the French at Quebec Citadel,
And Patrick from Cork, who came to instil
A love of his nativity.

The world's march of commerce and science and skill.
In errands of blessing their work to fulfil,
Move in the same course—north-westerly still—
The path of Christianity.³⁹

This vivid example of western boosterism and jingoism concludes with a chapter on the "Growth of Canada and the Imperial Federation." Within this one volume, the original Anglo-Canadian "myth of the north" which stressed the philosophical influence was adroitly transformed into a quasi-American-styled frontier myth that demanded the wilderness be conquered and converted into productive land.

As one might expect, there was little enthusiasm in eastern Canada for a project considered of greater benefit to the West. Ontario and Quebec preferred instead to exploit the mineral and lumber resources of their respective provincial norths. Long after the infrastructures of east-west trade were firmly established, the railway to Hudson Bay was finally completed in 1929, but on a much smaller scale than initially envisioned. One could argue that the northern focus of the western expansion movement was a figment of Manitoban imperialism and its objective to extend the little postage stamp province into one of great size and importance. But in this particular instance, the promise of unexploited northern resources appeared to have a disunifying effect on the country, compared to the more general Darwinian concept of a northern race destined to lead a prosperous nation.

Although reluctant to build the railway, Ottawa did not ignore the possibility of future development in the northern territories. To this end, a number of surveys and scientific expeditions were conducted from 1876 through to 1910, over and above those sponsored by the special investigation committees of the Senate and House of Commons. As expected, subsequent government reports were quite perfunctory, showing little concern for the aesthetic value of the

northern wilderness.⁴⁰ Moreover, actual development was severely limited by the problems of accessibility and high costs of transportation.

Yet another myth of the north was in the formative stages during the last half of the 19th century, originating from attitudes in the United States that placed a quite different perspective on the value of wilderness. The frontier myth which viewed land as an object to conquer was increasingly challenged in the published writings of an urban-based intellectual community. Just as Canadians had adopted their north as a means of national identification, "wilderness" was declared to be a symbol of America's uniqueness in the western world.⁴¹ Uninhabited lands were no longer described as fearful or alien, but rather a place of beauty and a psychological counterbalance to the negative aspects of urban life. Roderick Nash in *Wilderness and the American Mind* argues that this "romantic enthusiasm for wilderness never seriously challenged the aversion in the pioneer mind," but that it did soften the impact. The works of American philosophers such as Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson added to this interpretation by measuring the value of wilderness in terms of spiritualism and transcendentalism.⁴² It was definitely an urban-inspired idealism, arousing little sympathy among the residents of the frontier—a situation somewhat analogous to the resistance of white northerners to the present-day environmental movement.

Once this new perception of wilderness gained general acceptance, it was only a matter of time until concern arose for its preservation. By now the detrimental effects of clear-cut lumbering were increasingly apparent in the eastern forests; thus, it was not surprising that American foresters, naturalists and the intellectual community subsequently joined forces in a campaign to stem the disappearance of natural wild lands. When the western frontier began to close rapidly toward the end of the century, the conservation movement gained momentum, as reflected in the founding of the Sierra Club in 1892, with transcendentalist John Muir as president. Efforts to preserve large wilderness areas as national parks were accorded the ultimate in political support when President Theodore Roosevelt adopted an active leadership role in the campaign. In his estimation, the preservation of wilderness was necessary to prevent loss of character and manliness through "over-civilization." City life, he claimed, encouraged laziness of body and mind.⁴³

By comparison, the conservation movement that subsequently spread to Canada was more strongly influenced by the proponents of scientific forestry and tourism than by wilderness appreciation enthusiasts.⁴⁴ Accordingly, both Glacier and Banff National Parks were created as tourist attractions; the latter, with its hot springs, was initially promoted as a health spa. As well, provincial parks such as Ontario's Algonquin and Quetico were originally intended to be forest reserves

and were adapted to recreational use by enterprising bureaucrats.⁴⁵ In J. G. Nelson's view, not only did appreciation of the wilderness develop earlier in the United States, but in Canada "it seemingly appeared only rarely and then usually in the contained and conservative way typical of Canadian reaction to romantic or aesthetic ideas."⁴⁶ The "back-to-nature" ideology developed gradually in Canada,⁴⁷ but it was without political recognition until the creation of the Commission of Conservation in 1909 and the Advisory Board on Wildlife Protection in 1916. As so convincingly argued by Janet Foster in *Working for Wildlife*, the Canadian movement was not an intellectual or populist phenomenon, but one led by senior civil servants in the interests of forestry and recreation.⁴⁸

In the United States, the wilderness appreciation movement focused its attention on the far north at a much earlier date. By 1890, it was reported that over 5000 American tourists had travelled by steamship to Glacier Bay in Alaska, to enjoy "a wilderness experience."⁴⁹ Others ventured into the Canadian North, some seeking adventure and others hoping to gain scientific knowledge of various wildlife species. Some Americans went on personal expeditions, men such as Frank Russell and Caspar Whitney. They were joined by British adventure seekers: Henry Toke Munn, Warburton Pike and David Hanbury. Following the tradition of arctic explorers, these men also wrote complete narratives of their experiences, describing the hardships, the solitude and the vastness of the landscape, but with more emphasis on wilderness appreciation than earlier raconteurs.⁵⁰ For the most part, their travels followed the "quest pattern" adopted by the early polar explorers from the classical tradition set by Prometheus and Jason in Greek mythology.⁵¹ For both the Americans and British, the far north was perceived as a place of adventure and challenge, yet prior to the turn of the century, few Canadians set forth unless it was demanded by their profession.

Canadian apathy toward the far north disappeared in 1896 with the discovery of gold in the Yukon. Roderick Nash argues that the majority of stampeders followed the same quest pattern of the northern adventure-seekers in that most "sought the excitement of wilderness rather than gold. They were not frontiersmen, so much as city folks seeking a frontier experience."⁵² In some cases, the quest motive was fully recognized, prompting one group to christen their hand-built scow *The Argo*.⁵³ Whether American, Canadian, or European, they were all caught up in the magic of the gold rush. Vivid descriptions of the landscape, both picturesque and sublime, appeared in all manner of fiction, autobiographical accounts, guide books, poetry, prose, art and photographic collections. Words such as magnetic, majestic, silent, unbelievable and spiritual were employed with unusual frequency. As a result, the image relayed was one of high adventure, intrigue and mystery, challenge and hardship.

The Klondike literature placed the Canadian north on the world map, notably through the immortal works of Jack London and Robert Service. The former, a young bank clerk from Scotland, was particularly adept in describing the distinctive lure and magic of the northern wilderness in his immortal "The Spell of the Yukon":

There's gold, and it's haunting and haunting;
 It's luring me on as of old;
Yet it isn't the gold that I'm wanting
 So much as just finding the gold.
 It's the great, big broad land 'way up yonder,
 It's the forests where silence has lease;
It's the beauty that fills me with wonder,
 It's the stillness that fills me with peace.

There's a land where the mountains are nameless,
 And the rivers all run God knows where;
There are lives that are erring and aimless,
 And deaths that just hang by the hair;
There are hardships that nobody reckons;
 There are valleys unpeopled and still;
There's a land—oh, it beckons and beckons,
 And I want to go back,—and I will.

In these sixteen lines, Service captured the magnetism, the quest, the grandeur, the isolation and the awesome spiritual quality of the northern wilderness. For decades, his poems were memorized by school children, and even to the present day, they are still recited around the campfires of wilderness canoe trips.

While most gold seekers were caught up in the excitement of the event, a few were critical. Two individuals, the American Dr. Hudson Stuck and Anglican Bishop Bompas, both wrote of the adverse effect on the Indians. From their professional viewpoints, Elihu Stewart, Canadian Superintendent of Forestry, lamented over the denuded forests, whereas William Ogilvie, Commissioner of the Yukon in 1899, referred to two calamities that might befall a nation: "war and the discovery of gold."⁵⁴ Perhaps understandable considering the strength of the American wilderness ideal, it was President McKinley who took the first official action to protect a portion of the Alaskan wilderness from possible abuse by the miners and their camp followers. Acceding to the demands of sportsmen and big game hunters, in 1917 he approved a bill creating Mount McKinley National Park.⁵⁵ There was no comparable concern for the Yukon wilderness. Even game regulations were considered a local matter and left to the territorial government.⁵⁶

Meanwhile, the gold rush had brought a more serious political concern to light. Although there was some initial fear that Canadian authority in the Yukon might be challenged by the Americans, Ottawa successfully enforced British law and order with the aid of the Northwest Mounted Police, a handful of government officials and a company of Royal Canadian Dragoons. The subsequent Alaska boundary dispute, however, raised a public furor over the issue of sovereign rights. While Canadian claims were tenuous from the start, the aggressive and somewhat arrogant manner in which the Americans handled their case at the tribunal court was strongly resented. Not only were very partial judges selected to represent the United States, but President Roosevelt threatened to use force if American claims were rejected.⁵⁷ There were also rumours that Roosevelt planned to buy Greenland and take over the arctic islands, thus creating a northern flank to advance America's "manifest destiny." The Canadian media responded with outrage, fanning public fears of American intentions; representatives in the House of Commons warned they would go to war if necessary to defend against any American encroachment on sovereign rights.⁵⁸ For the next 40 years, Ottawa's concern about the north was less for its development than fear lest [Canadians] lose it.

In terms of political concern for the north, the period from 1900 to 1940 was a somewhat unsettled yet uneventful phase. To effect an appearance of "quasi-occupation", the Arctic Islands Game Preserve was created, arctic patrols were instituted and eventually regularized, scientific explorations continued and new Mounted Police posts were built in the Arctic and sub-Arctic regions. A number of books were written by the new government employees in the north, but their descriptions showed little of the subjective emotion expressed by the British explorers or the American adventurers of earlier years.⁵⁹ The issue of northern sovereignty remained a serious concern, although other crises such as labour unrest, depression and war claimed higher priority.

After the gold rush subsided, only a few adventure-seekers continued to travel to the far north in search of excitement and fulfilment, but those who did still wrote and published narratives; many conducted lecture tours; a few admitted to being motivated by the Arctic adventure stories read in their youth. Many experienced an emotional disorientation when re-entering the "civilized" world; as described by George Douglas after returning from two years in the Barrens, "the times had changed, the change in ourselves had no reference to them but made conformity to established usages more than ever, difficult."⁶⁰ Just as the escapades of the *coureurs de bois* represented a refuge from the regulated society of New France, the wilderness adventure was now clearly identified as an escape from urban society. Meanwhile, more and more Canadians acquired new

knowledge of their “northern heritage” by way of the autobiographies, magazine articles and novels written by the 20th-century explorers.

By now, American books and journals extolling the values of a wilderness experience had found their way north of the border into most Canadian homes. The “nature writers” had a definite purpose, described by one such American author as a means of encouraging discovery of “some beautiful and forgotten part of ... man’s own soul.”⁶¹ For Americans, wilderness could be found in pockets throughout their land, in New Mexico, northern California, New England and the Everglades. The canoe tradition figured most strongly in the northeastern states, as well as northern Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota. With the possible exception of Maritimers, wilderness meant “north” of everywhere to Canadians. In Gaile McGregor’s view, “Canadians embraced enthusiastically a romantic cult of primitivistic wilderness worship” that over time created a deeply ingrained environmental perspective that “still exerts a disproportionate influence on Canadian thinking.”⁶²

Following in step with American trends, a number of Canadian authors adopted a similar emphasis on nature and wildlife. Adventures set in wilderness settings quickly gained popularity: the works of P. G. Downes, Arthur Heming and Grey Owl, as well as the unique wild animal stories of C. G. D. Roberts and Ernest Thompson Seton. Canadian magazines continued to carry articles describing northern wilderness experiences, most accompanied by illustrations or photographs. Similarly, advertisements increasingly used pictures of wildlife, canoes, lakes, rocks and pine trees to promote various commercial products or services. Growing popularity of the wilderness ideal also provided the impetus for C. W. Jefferys, Tom Thomson, Emily Carr and the Group of Seven landscape artists to portray their images of mountains, trees and water as symbols of Canadian nationalist sentiment.

For many Canadians, the wilderness was more than a mental image, since with minimal effort, one could experience it first-hand in the “near north.” American money built three-storey summer hotels, rustic lodges, fishing camps and cottages in Ontario and Quebec’s lake country. Canadians followed on their heels, to the Laurentians, the Muskokas, Kawarthas, Temagami, along Georgian Bay and on through the Lake of the Woods region to the Rockies. The ability to paddle a canoe was considered essential to enjoy a northern vacation, and wilderness canoe tripping inevitably became the ultimate experience in understanding the meaning of Canada. An article appearing in *Rod and Gun* as early as 1915 expressed the sentiment most eloquently.

There is a secret influence at work in the wild places of the North that seems to cast a spell over the men who have once been in them. One can never forget the lakes of such wonderful beauty, the rivers, peaceful

or turbulent, and the quiet portage paths, or the mighty forest of real trees. It is really getting to know Canada, to go where these things are. After having made camps along the water routes, one feels a proud sense of ownership of that part of the country, which must develop into a deeper feeling of patriotism in regard to the whole land.⁶³

By this time, the romantic image of “north” had spread into every aspect of the Canadian culture, in much the same way as the appreciation of wilderness was absorbed earlier into the American ethos. Youth camps for both the wealthy and less privileged sprang up in the lake country, providing an opportunity to learn the necessary prerequisites for a wilderness experience: swimming, canoeing, woodcraft and survival techniques.⁶⁴ They also learned the ways of the Indian, his respect for nature, his legends and rites. New national and provincial parks were created, and politicians began to talk more earnestly of the need to preserve wildlife. The message was carried throughout Canada and the United States, in school textbooks, by the Boy Scouts and YMCA, in novels, sermons, hymns and art.⁶⁵

An example of the fervour and moral conviction behind the ideology is found in the 1918 edition of the *Tuxis Boys' Manual*. The purpose of the canoe trip was described as not simply to develop a strong physique and moral character, but to see and understand the true meaning of Canada. A “camp log” written by John D. Spence outlined some of the potential benefits:

A brief return to the crudeness of nature; a brief renunciation of the artificiality of business and social life; a brief enjoyment of skies and lakes and rocks and pine trees at their freshest and best. Then, with firmer grip and steadier purpose, back to the work or the waiting, back to the rush and the bustle of the city, to brush shoulders with our fellows in whom we approve the good and censure the selfishness with greater charity because we have been ourselves brought nearer to the trust and truthfulness of our childhood.⁶⁶

Significantly, the conscientious effort to educate the younger generation on the value of Canada's north was derived from convictions already held by an adult intellectual elite. To have experienced a wilderness canoe trip was the mark of an educated and enlightened gentleman.

As in the days of the *voyageurs*, once again the romantic image of the north is closely related to the canoe in popular literature, poems and song, whether it be Pauline Johnson's “The Song My Paddle Sings,” George Marsh's “The Old Canoe” or the venerable “Land of the Silver Birch.” Perhaps maudlin by present-day standards, “To the North,” appearing in the University of Toronto Songbook, seems to sum it all up:

Nor South, nor East, nor golden West,
Can match the Northland's rugged pride,

The North, the hardy North's the best!
To the North, to the North we go!
To the North, where the pine trees grow.

Then it's ho! for the gleaming paddle; And
It's ho! for the line and rod,
And the rushing fall, and the pine trees tall,
And the waters bright and broad,
To the North, to the North we go!
To the North, where the pine trees grow.

In contrast to the fur trade myth, the wilderness myth was a product of both the intellectual elite and the average Canadian.

The Great War appeared to have a sobering effect on those dreams of untold wealth awaiting Canadians in their northern wilderness. Although veteran prospectors still ventured forth, advances in mining technology and the advent of the bush plane gave an added advantage to company ventures backed by greater financial resources. Even the discovery of gold on the shores of Great Slave Lake in 1937 failed to rekindle the enthusiasm of the Klondike years. In the cynical opinion of one long-time resident of Yellowknife, "the Dawson rush was like the careering gallop of a wild unbroken stallion, and the Yellowknife rush, like the plodding of a cart horse."⁶⁷ Many still sought instant riches, but the stock market of the 1920s provided more promising prospects, with seemingly less risk and minimal physical effort. When it crashed in the fall of 1929, most Canadians sought stability and security. Canoe trips offered a relatively inexpensive vacation, but only a privileged few could afford extensive time away from work if they were lucky enough to be employed. By the nature of their professions, schoolteachers and senior academics were among the more fortunate. Meanwhile, bush planes were increasing their penetration into the far north, making access less of a challenge and the experience less unique. Similarly, as the near north caught the imagination of urban southerners, the wilderness quality slowly diminished, helped along by a growing number of American tourists.

Still, many Canadians continued to view the canoeing experience as a link to their land and heritage.⁶⁸ As Canadian historian A. R. M. Lower observed after a canoe trip to James Bay,

... only those who have had the experience can know what a sense of physical and spiritual excitement comes to one who turns his face away from men towards the unknown. In his small way he is doing what the great explorers have done before him, and his elation recaptures theirs.⁶⁹

As such, the northern canoe trip had become more than a holiday; it was a pursuit of one's heritage and as such became a popular pastime among the more intellectually oriented.

By the Second World War, the far north was still a subject of curiosity and still celebrated as an intangible influence on the nation's character—"the true north, strong and free." The bombing of Pearl Harbor, however, transformed the far-off romantic image into one of stark reality. In addition to its newly acquired strategic significance, the prolific wartime activities associated with the building of the Alaska Highway, the Canol pipeline and numerous airfields, radar and weather stations brought to light serious concerns related to sovereignty and previous government neglect. By 1943, it was reported that Americans outnumbered the resident population of the two territories. Once alerted, Ottawa took action to ensure that there would be no demands for post-war benefits by compensating the United States for the construction of all permanent facilities. For the time being, at least, the perceived threat to northern sovereignty had been quelled.⁷⁰

Before the war had ended, a number of influential civil servants and private citizens began to pressure Ottawa for major changes in social and economic policies, utilizing all forms of media to publicize their objectives. There was never a formal organization or association, although most were founding members of the Arctic Institute of North America. Their efforts were successful to the extent that within a decade, government became the largest single employer in the territorial north.⁷¹ The consequences of the reforms fell far short of expectations. The greater significance here lies in the confusion and contradiction inherent in the message they delivered to the Canadian people.

By all accounts, the arguments and rhetoric employed by the northern promoters of the 1940s appeared to echo the western expansion propaganda of the 1880s. A *Financial Post* headline declared "War Unlocks Our Last Frontier—Canada's Northern Opportunity," and the journalist went on to predict the migration of thousands of young men to a new industrial north. In the same edition, Lt. Col. George Drew, later Premier of Ontario, lauded the potential of the far north, claiming that "the air could become to Canada what the sea has been to Britain."⁷² Numerous articles appeared in journals and magazines, with repeated reference to "a new north" or "a land of opportunity" and "opening the northern frontier." Yet there was also a romantic emphasis in some of the jingoism, as expressed in the title of the *Romance of the Alaska Highway*, or in the prose of Lester Pearson's article that spoke of "the unexplored frontier, luring the pathfinder into the unknown."⁷³ Charles Camsell, then Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, wrote of the "lure of the north" as "something inherent in the human heart and the human soul which responds to the appeal of

Wilderness.” But in the very same article, he also referred to an image of the north comparable to the nationalist rhetoric of the Victorian era:

Just as the map of Canada has for a century been unrolled westward, so now it is northward that “the tide of Empire takes its way.” The same racial stock which has carried the flag around the world will also carry it to the farthest north, and we may be sure that they and their sons and daughters will write a record of achievement not unworthy of the race from which they sprang.⁷⁴

Other articles also spoke of destiny and empires. The *Edmonton Bulletin* claimed that the opening of the northwest was “just as important to this age as was the opening of the prairie farmlands to the people forty years ago.... An Empire is being born,” and *The Times* in London described the Alaska Highway as a “new Northwest Passage.”⁷⁵ Quite unconsciously, the lure of the wilderness and the vision of a settled north were being combined into a promise of national identity and modern progress, as part of the war and post-war phases of Canadian nationalism. Despite the obvious contradiction, this message was successful in attracting the attention of a new generation of Canadians to the potential and importance of their north.

Major changes did take place in the northern territories, particularly in the field of social services to the Indians and Inuit. Dr. Hugh L. Keenleyside, a former member of External Affairs and deputy minister in charge of the administration of northern affairs from 1949-1950, was perhaps one of the more enlightened and progressive civil servants of the immediate post-war period.⁷⁶ While social concerns appeared to have higher priority than economic development, Keenleyside was also aware of the intangible impact of the north in the Canadian conscience. In the stirring conclusion to a convocation address in May 1949, he addressed the concept of freedom in the north in collective terms.

The North has been referred to as the frontier. But the frontier is more than a geographical area; it is a way of life, a habit of mind. As such it plays a most significant role in the national life....

The virtues peculiar to frontier conditions — social and political democracy, independence and self-reliance, freedom in co-operation, hospitality and social responsibility — are virtues of particular importance in national life.... as long as the frontier remains, there will be Canadians who will never succumb to the dogmas of the totalitarian or the power of domestic tyranny. The frontier is a bastion of freedom, and the North is a permanent frontier.⁷⁷

Again, the contradiction and confusion reside in the reference to a frontier, which denotes advancement of settlement, and a permanent frontier, which implies that

there will always be “a place beyond.” Not surprisingly, the question of development or non-development of the Arctic has become a topic of contentious debate in more recent years.⁷⁸

Changes in perceptions of the north were inevitable. In the post-war period, particularly, the earlier concept of a northern experience as a challenge and as character building gave way to the importance of learning skills and safety precautions.⁷⁹ Other interests such as tennis, gymnastics and computer science replaced the traditional woodcraft, canoeing and nature crafts at summer youth camps. In the near north, modern technology brought new roads, high-speed motorboats, hydro, television and eventually the telephone. With increasing urbanization, the natural world retreated further and further north. Eventually, a deep wilderness encounter became a costly endeavour, but one still sought by many intellectual elites.

The concept of “north as homeland” was brought to the attention of southerners by the Hon. Justice Thomas Berger in his report on the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry, and his words struck the conscience of many Canadians when he warned that “the future of Canada is a matter of importance to us all. What happens here will tell us something about what kind of country Canada is, what kind of people we are.”⁸⁰ After 1977, the native rights movement in northern Canada became inextricably intertwined with the environmental movement, a fact that aided in temporarily halting some mega-projects and slowing the pace of others.

The debate continues between the developers and the environmentalists, and there is even disagreement between some environmentalists and the more radical ecological philosophers who would advocate non-development of the remaining northern wilderness areas.⁸¹ Similarly, the concept of wilderness as a means of escaping the ills of urban society has been a topic of increasing study by social scientists in the past few decades, perhaps with much greater concern in light of the accelerating advance of industrialization into the far north. The noted Canadian author Wayland Drew wrote that “only in wilderness is it possible to escape this tyranny.”⁸² On the other hand, historian John Wadland laments that many Canadians see the wilderness only as “a detached, ambiguous and ultimately a romantic space we ‘escape’ to,” rather than one existing for its own value.⁸³ Ultimately, in Canada, true wilderness gradually became equated with the far north, as people and industry slowly moved into the few unsettled lands remaining in the southern regions. Yet to those who have travelled extensively in the Arctic and sub-Arctic, even here the wilderness is being eroded by man and industry, and the process is not leisurely. In each myth, the north is measured in terms of value. In the romantic myth of British origin, the aesthetic and spiritual quality was the dominant feature. The fur trade myths envisioned profit,

adventure and challenge in the *pays d'en haut*. The pioneers viewed the adjacent unsettled lands in terms of agricultural and resource potential but were quite fearful of the remoteness and immenseness of the far north; the Anglo-Canadian nation-builders saw the north as both a philosophical influence and a promise of future prosperity; the western expansionists adopted the frontier concept of resource exploitation; the Americans believed the wilderness must be preserved as part of their heritage. To the indigenous peoples, the north was their homeland and the very essence of their being.

Each myth has had its period of ascendancy. Some have been moulded into a distinctly Canadian mosaic, abstract yet revered. The British aesthetic myth blended with the American wilderness myth to reinforce a romantic image of north as expressed first in literature and art, then incorporated into the environmental movement of the 1970s. The French-Canadian myths are more complex, yet the primary thrust involves adventure, alienation and promise of resource wealth, perhaps not too dissimilar to the contradictions inherent in the challenge of the American frontier or in the pioneering spirit of early Upper Canadians. Certainly, a version of the resource myth is still actively promoted by the multinational oil companies, completely and irreconcilably at odds with the wilderness myths. Meanwhile, the spiritual orientation of the north as homeland has only just begun to impact the southern conscience. Overriding all the variants is the "core" myth, with an enduring quality that suggests the vast wilderness regions still impart a distinct character to the Canadian nation, its people and its institutions. As such, the "myth of the north," with all its inherent contradictions, continues to explain the intangible meaning of north in the Canadian ethos.

Notes

¹ Keith Walden, *Visions of Order: The Canadian Mounties in Symbol and Myth*. (Toronto: Butterworths, 1982) 116 and 8-12.

² Robert Bringhurst, "Myths Create a World of Meaning," *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto: 7 May 1988).

³ Louis-Edmond Hamelin, *Canadian Nordicity: It's Your North, Too*. English edition (Montreal: Harvest House, 1978) 15-46.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 30 and 41.

⁵ Hugh Brody, *Maps and Dreams: Indians and the British Columbia Frontier*. (Markham: Pelican Books, 1983) 57.

⁶ W. L. Morton, *The Canadian Identity*, 2nd edition. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972) 93.

⁷ W. L. Morton, "The 'North' in Canadian Historiography," *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, Series IV, Volume VIII (1970) 40.

⁸ Carl Berger, "The True North, Strong and Free...", in Peter Russell (ed.), *Nationalism in Canada*. (Toronto: McGraw Hill Ryerson, 1966) 5.

⁹ Robert Page, *Northern Development: The Canadian Dilemma*. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986) 2 and 23.

¹⁰ Bruce Hodgins, "The Canadian North: Conflicting Images, Conflicting Historiography," in *Voyageur: Collected Papers and Proceedings of the Work-in-Progress Colloquium, 1979-1980*. (Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario).

¹¹ Fred Bruemmer, *The Arctic*. (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1974) 208.

¹² *Ibid.*, 218. See also Penny Petrone (ed.), *Northern Voices: Inuit Writing in English*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988) 202-203.

¹³ The words of George Blondin, as quoted in *Denendeh: A Dene Celebration*. (Yellowknife, NWT: The Dene Association, 1984) 93.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 7-17.

¹⁵ John Webster Grant, *Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and the Indians of Canada in Encounter since 1534*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984) 63. See also W. J. Eccles, "The Fur Trade and Eighteenth-Century Imperialism," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Series 3, 40:3 (July 1983) 362.

¹⁶ Peter C. Newman, *Company of Adventurers*. (Toronto: Viking Press, 1985) 89-90.

¹⁷ George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne, "Verses on the Prospect of Planting Arts and Learning in America" (London: 1972).

¹⁸ As quoted from R. M. Ballantyne, *Hudson Bay* (London, 1879) in Eric Morse, *Fur Trade Routes of Canada/Then and Now* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2nd edition, reprint 1984), 110.

¹⁹ Edith Fowke, *Folktales of French Canada* (Toronto: NC Press, 1982) 77 and 116-124. Other folktales are found in Joseph-Charles Taché's *Forestiers et Voyageurs*, originally published in 1884 and reprinted by Fides in Montreal, 1946.

²⁰ Morse, *Fur Trade Routes of Canada*, 13.

²¹ Jack Warwick, *The Long Journey: Literary Themes of French Canada*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968) 19-33. Also see Edith Fowke and Richard Johnston (eds.), *Folk Songs of Quebec*. (Waterloo: Waterloo Music Company, 1957); and Fowke.

²² Christian Morissonneau, *La Terre promise: le mythe du Nord québécois*. (Montreal: Hurtubise, 1978). Also see A. I. Silver, *The French-Canadian Idea of Confederation, 1864-1900*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982) 218-243.

²³ Gaile McGregor in *The Wacousta Syndrome* argues that a hostile image of wilderness was inadvertently reinforced by the *voyageur* legends. Although based on speculation rather than substantiation, McGregor claims that "linked as he was with subversion and irreligion, the *voyageur*'s real and symbolic links with nature could only help make the wilderness seem more, rather than less, threatening, if not

physical then certainly in spiritual terms." Gaile McGregor, *The Wacousta Syndrome: Explorations in the Canadian Landscape*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985) 63.

²⁴ Warwick, 163.

²⁵ I. S. MacLaren, "The Aesthetic Map of the North, 1845-1859," *Arctic*, 38:2 (June 1985) 89-90.

²⁶ Alexander Henry, *Travels and Adventures in Canada and the Indian Territories Between the Years 1760 and 1776*. (New York: 1809) 336.

²⁷ Alexander Mackenzie, *Voyages from Montreal, on the River St. Lawrence, through the Continent of North America, to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans; In the Years 1789 and 1793*. (London: 1801) 20.

²⁸ McGregor, 42.

²⁹ C. Stuart Houston (ed.), *To the Arctic by Canoe, 1819-1821: The Journal and Paintings of Robert Hood, Midshipman with Franklin*. (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1972).

³⁰ MacLaren, 89.

³¹ See Hugh Wallace, *The Navy, the Company, and Richard King: British Exploration in the Canadian Arctic, 1829-1860*. (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1980).

³² *Ibid.*, 98.

³³ As quoted in Bruemmer, 67.

³⁴ Walter Wellman, "A Dash for the North Pole," *Fram*, 1:2 (Summer 1984) 728. The article was originally published in *The National Magazine*, 6:6 (September 1897) 485-492.

³⁵ Berger, "True North, Strong and Free...", 5. See also Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970).

³⁶ Richard Rohmer, *Essays on Mid-Canada*. (Toronto: 1970), and his *The Arctic Imperative: An Overview of the Energy Crisis*. (Toronto: 1973).

³⁷ Doug Owram, *Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West, 1856-1900*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980).

³⁸ Charles Tuttle, *Our North Land: Being a Full Account of the Canadian North-West and Hudson's Bay Route, Together with a Narrative of the Experiences of the Hudson's Bay Expedition of 1884, Including a Description of the Climate, Resources, and the Characteristics of the Native Inhabitants Between the 50th Parallel and the Arctic Circle*. (Toronto: C. Blackett Robinson, 1885) 17.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁴⁰ As an example, see Ernest Chambers, *The Unexploited West: A Compilation of all of the authentic information available at the present time as to the natural resources of the unexploited regions of northern Canada*. (Ottawa: Department of the Interior, 1914).

- ⁴¹ Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 3rd edition, 1982) 67.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, 67-95.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, 150. For the complete story, see 96-237.
- ⁴⁴ Peter Gillis, "The Ottawa Lumber Barons and the Conservation Movement, 1880-1914," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, IX (February 1974).
- ⁴⁵ J. G. Nelson, "Canada's National Parks: Past, Present and Future," and K. Morrison, "The Evolution of the Ontario Provincial Park System," both in Geoffrey Wall and John Marsh (eds.), *Recreational Land Use: Perspectives on its Evolution in Canada* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1982) 43-45 and 102-107 respectively.
- ⁴⁶ Nelson, 45.
- ⁴⁷ G. Altmeyer, "Three ideas of nature in Canada, 1893-1914," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 11 (1976) 21.
- ⁴⁸ Janet Foster, *Working for Wildlife: The Beginning of Preservation in Canada*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978) 220-223.
- ⁴⁹ Nash, 281-282.
- ⁵⁰ Margaret Hobbs, "Purposeful Wanderers: Late Nineteenth Century Travellers to the Barrens," in Bruce W. Hodgins and Margaret Hobbs (eds.), *Nastawgan: The Canadian North by Canoe & Snowshoe*. (Agincourt, Ontario: Betelgeuse, 1985) 57-79.
- ⁵¹ William James, professor of religion at Queen's University, relates the quest pattern to canoe trip adventures in the Canadian Shield, where the actor sets off to unknown mysterious lands, overcomes numerous trials and tribulations, and returns wiser, changed and in some cases having experienced a spiritual rebirth. The pattern was first identified by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (New York: 1956). See William C. James, "The Quest Pattern and the Canoe Trip," in *Nastawgan*, 9-10.
- ⁵² Nash, 284-285.
- ⁵³ W. N. Robertson, *Yukon Memories*. (Toronto: Hunter, Rose and Company, 1930) 5.
- ⁵⁴ See H. A. Cody, *An Apostle of the North: Memoirs of the Right Reverend William Carpenter Bompas*. (Toronto: Musson, 1908); William Ogilvie, *Early Days on the Yukon & the Story of its Gold Finds*. (London: John Lane, 1913) 177; Hudson Stuck, *Voyages on the Yukon and its Tributaries: A Narrative of Summer Travel in the Interior of Alaska*. (New York: Scribner's, 1917); and Elihu Stewart, *Down the Mackenzie and Up the Yukon in 1906*. (London: John Lane, 1913).
- ⁵⁵ Nash, 285-286.
- ⁵⁶ Robert G. McCandless, *Yukon Wildlife: A Social History*. (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1985) 22-41.
- ⁵⁷ Lewis Green, *The Boundary Hunters: Surveying the 141st Meridian and the Alaskan Panhandle*. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1982) 89.

⁵⁸ Page, 13.

⁵⁹ As examples, see H. P. Lee, *Policing the Top of the World*. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1928); A. P. Low, *The Cruise of the Neptune*. (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 1906); and J. E. Bernier, *Master Mariner and Arctic Explorer: A Narrative of Sixty Years at Sea from the Logs and Yarns of Captain J. E. Bernier*. (Ottawa: Le Droit, 1939).

⁶⁰ George M. Douglas, *Lands Forlorn: A Story of an Expedition to Hearne's Coppermine River*. (New York: 1914) 270. For further examples, see Michael H. Mason, *The Arctic Forests*. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1924) 311; Captain Thierry Mallet, *Glimpses of the Barren Lands*. (New York: privately printed for Revillon Frères, 1930); and Fullerton Waldo, *Down the Mackenzie through the Great Lone Land*. (New York: Macmillan, 1923).

⁶¹ William J. Long, *Northern Trails*. (Boston: Ginn, 1905) 217.

⁶² McGregor, 51-52. The author also emphasizes that both British and American literature in Canadian homes far outweighed the presence of Canadian works, well into the mid-20th century, 55.

⁶³ W. R. Bocking, "A Canoe Trip," *Rod and Gun*, 12:6 (1915) 6. As quoted in J. Benidickson, "Paddling for pleasure: recreational canoeing as a Canadian way of life," in *Recreational Land Use*, 325.

⁶⁴ Brian Back, *The Keewaydin Way: A Portrait: 1893-1983*. (Temagami: 1983).

⁶⁵ See John Henry Wadland, *Ernest Thompson Seton: Man in Nature and the Progressive Era, 1880-1915*. (New York: Arno Press, 1981) and T. D. MacLulich, "Reading the Land: The Wilderness Tradition in Canadian Letters," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 20:2 (Summer 1985) 29. Also Peter J. Schmitt, *Back to Nature: The Arcadian Myth in Urban America*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969).

⁶⁶ *Tuxis Boys' Manual for Older Boys*. (Canada: Young Men's Christian Association, 1918) 181 and 189-191.

⁶⁷ Ray Price, *Yellowknife*. (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1967).

⁶⁸ See Jamie Benidickson, "'Idleness, Water and a Canoe': Canadian Recreational Paddling Between the Wars," 163-182, and Bruce W. Hodgins, "The Lure of the Temagami-Based Canoe Trip," 189-202. Both articles found in *Nastawgan*.

⁶⁹ A. R. M. Lower, *Unconventional Voyages*. (Toronto: 1953) 24.

⁷⁰ For more details of the World War II (WWII) period, see Shelagh D. Grant, *Sovereignty or Security? Government Policy in the Canadian North, 1936-1950*. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988).

⁷¹ Subject of an article by the author, "Northern Nationalists: Visions of a New North," in Kenneth S. Coates and William R. Morrison (eds.), *For Purposes of Dominion: Essays in Honour of Morris Zaslow*. (Toronto: Captus, 1989) 47-70.

⁷² *Financial Post*, 3 April 1943.

⁷³ Lester B. Pearson, "Canada Looks 'Down North'," in *Foreign Affairs* 24 (Winter 1945).

⁷⁴ Charles Camsell, "Opening the Northwest," *The Beaver* (June 1944) 15.

⁷⁵ As reported in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, 23 June 1943, and *The Times*, 5 July 1943.

⁷⁶ See Chapter 8, *Sovereignty or Security?*

⁷⁷ Also in Hugh Keenleyside, "Recent Developments in the Canadian North," *Canadian Geographical Journal*, 39 (1949) 75.

⁷⁸ As an example, see John Livingston, "Introduction to the Arctic Debate," in *Arctic Oil: Destruction of the North?* (Toronto: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1981) 13-20.

⁷⁹ C.E.S. Franks, *The Canoe and White Water: From Essential to Sport* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 60-63.

⁸⁰ Thomas R. Berger, *Northern Frontier: Northern Homeland: The Report of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry*, Volume 1 (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 1977) 1.

⁸¹ As an example, see John Livingston, *Arctic Oil: The Destruction of the North?* and similar arguments advanced in Livingston, *The Fallacy of Wildlife Conservation*. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1981).

⁸² Wayland Drew, "Killing Wilderness," *Ontario Naturalist*, 12 (September 1972) 22.

⁸³ John Wadland, "Wilderness and Culture," *Park News*, 19 (Summer 1982) 13.

4

Imagination and Spirituality: Written Narratives and the Oral Tradition

First published in *Echoing Silence: Essays on Arctic Narrative*, ed. John Moss (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1997), 191-209.

For over a millennium, Inuit history and culture were carefully nurtured and preserved by the oral tradition. With the arrival of the Qallunaat, a second, quite different history and identity began to take form in the written narratives of the Arctic explorers. For a while, each evolved in isolation, as if the other did not exist, with both cultures believing in their own superiority. One was written, the child of western civilization; the other was oral, passed down from generation to generation by the indigenous peoples. One was based on the observations of a transient newcomer; the other on the experience of a long-time inhabitant. The former was driven by imagination; the latter by spirituality. Although moulded and reshaped by the twentieth century, similar distinctions exist even today.

Based on long-standing cultural traditions, these disparate views of Arctic history represent quite contradictory views on the capability of humans to survive in the Arctic environment. The nineteenth-century exploration narratives expounded the tenets of Social Darwinism and Judaeo-Christianity, extolling the superior ability of man, not woman, to conquer the natural world. Beau Riffenburgh, in his definitive study, *The Myth of the Explorer*, related how, in an era of imperialistic nationalism, “men who achieved remarkable feats were more than just popular heroes; they were symbols of real and imagined nationalist or imperialist cultural greatness.”¹ In nineteenth-century Europe and America, the Arctic represented the ultimate challenge to both man and nation—the Ultima Thule. And so began Western civilization’s fascination with the Arctic landscape and exploration history, replete with nineteenth-century egocentrism, chauvinism and nationalism, and a vista distorted by vivid imagination.

The Inuit, as well, had incorporated a set of moral values in the representation of their history. Initially expressed in their ancient legends and reinforced by later

stories, a distinctive code of ethics was established to govern Inuit social behaviour. Guided by a unique form of spirituality, the objective was to maintain an egalitarian society in peaceful harmony with the environment. To do so demanded respect for the land, the animals, the birds, and the creatures of the sea. As Ivaluardjuk, a Netsilik Inuk, explained to Knud Rasmussen in 1922:

... the greatest peril of life lies in the fact that human food consists entirely of souls. All the creatures that we have to kill and eat, all those that we have to strike down and destroy to make clothes for ourselves, have souls, like we have, souls that do not perish with the body, and which must therefore be propitiated lest they should revenge themselves on us for taking away their bodies.²

Their philosophy implied a co-dependence between the “hunter and the hunted”³—a contract, as it were, between equal partners. As described more recently by an Inuk from Baker Lake, the relationship was “so close that it seemed like the animals understood Inuktitut.”⁴ Co-operation and sharing were key to survival; conflict and dishonesty would be avenged by the spirits. Such a thing as “luck,” as we know it, did not exist in nineteenth-century Inuit culture.⁵

The most powerful member of a pre-Christian Inuit community was the Shaman or Angakok, who possessed the multiple roles of “priest, physician and prophet” with special powers to contact the spirits.⁶

The angakut were acknowledged or authorized teachers and judges on all questions concerning religious beliefs; and this belief in many ways acting upon the customs and social life of the people, the angakut necessarily became a kind of civil magistrate; and lastly, they had not only to teach their fellow-men how to obtain supernatural help, but also to give such assistance directly themselves.⁷

Once someone violated a strict taboo, the only means of release from the consequences was a public confession, usually with the assistance of the shaman. Even then, the transgression would be considered a “sin” rather than a “crime.”⁸ Honesty was key to survival for the small hunting communities. Unacceptable behaviour, such as displaying arrogance, taking others’ property, committing adultery without consent, or failing to share food or shelter, was controlled by diverse methods of social ostracism ranging from rude remarks and gossip to a fate worse than death—banishment. Aggressive behaviour was unacceptable among family and friends, and, if possible, to be avoided when in contact with strangers. Murder was tolerated only if everyone agreed that the individual posed a serious threat to the community.⁹

In many respects, the ancient legends and teachings of the oral tradition might be compared to those of the Judaeo-Christian Bible. Both explained the origins [of the world] and provided the tenets for a strict code of social behaviour.

In the Inuit culture, however, there was no worship of one “God,” or even several gods, but there was a profound fear of supernatural powers capable of rewarding or punishing behaviour. These spirits were “concealed in nature” and something “to which human life [was] subordinated.”¹⁰ To show disrespect or cause a creature to suffer would likely incur some form of revenge, whether by disease, starvation, or accident. To the Europeans, belief in spirits and immortal souls of animals was considered pagan and evil. Thus, to civilize the primitive natives, they must first be introduced to Christianity. As explained by one missionary, “to watch the Eskimo pass from a sinful and degraded paganism into the faith and practice of Jesus Christ is the true romance of the Arctic missionary, beside which all else is as nothing.”¹¹ Two cultures—two perceptions. One believed in the right to conquer evil and Nature; the other hoped to avoid evil and live in harmony with Nature.

Both the written narrative and the oral tradition were considered means of entertainment, as well as education. For the Inuit, storytelling was frequently accompanied by songs and dances. Here, the messages conveyed in the lyrical poetry were simple, but profound.

And yet, there is only
 One great thing,
 The only thing;
 To see in huts and on journeys
 The great day that dawns,
 And the light that fills the world.¹²

Traditionally, happiness was derived from the Inuit’s love and respect for their environment. Their surroundings were called Nunassiaq, meaning simply the beautiful land.¹³ No other description was necessary.

By contrast, the language used by the Qallunaat to describe the Arctic landscape could hardly be described as simple or succinct. Beginning in 530 A.D., when the Irish monk St. Brendan wrote of “floating crystal castles,” and on through to the early nineteenth century, the Arctic landscape was portrayed as vast, cold, barren, yet mystical.¹⁴ Although most accounts written in the early nineteenth century, such as those by Captains Wm. E. Parry and G. F. Lyon, seemed understated and “full of mundane details,”¹⁵ this did not prevent Europeans from creating their own images of a frozen, lifeless horizon of icebergs and glaciers, surrounded by stormy seas and misty snows, as depicted in Coleridge’s *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and Shelley’s *Frankenstein*.¹⁶ While John Moss has suggested that “no rendering of the landscape can ever quite describe what is actually there,”¹⁷ in this case, the British Admiralty’s more rational descriptions were largely ignored. As a result, fantasy and illusion would

dominate in the profusion of Arctic literature that followed in the latter half of the century.

In the Victorian era, authors of narratives, poetry, and fiction needed little encouragement to vent their imaginations, and they employed all manner of literary expression to convey the splendour and mystery of the Arctic landscape. Literary analysts have divided the descriptive techniques employed into two categories: the “picturesque” and the “sublime.” The picturesque interpretation was employed to depict the Arctic landscape in terms familiar to the readers,¹⁸ as did Charles Ede in 1878, when he wrote of “huge icebergs ... moving southward, in a solemn state, mimicking in their varied forms the towers, spires, and steeples of some far city.”¹⁹ The Arctic sublime, on the other hand, was the antithesis of familiar landscape and employed superlative imagery to create an awe-inspiring vista of unearthly grandeur: of sheer cliffs, contorted icebergs, and radiant northern lights, interspersed with scenes of ferocious white bears and gargoyle-like walrus. Riffenburgh argues that the “knowledge the public thus gained of the Arctic was a compound of fact and fantasy, and was dominated by the power of the sublime.”²⁰

To reinforce the imaginative literary prose, publishers embellished their books with fanciful etchings of majestic spires and sheer cliffs, while framing dwarfed sailing ships with grotesquely contorted icebergs. These romanticized images of the Arctic landscape²¹ were in sharp contrast to early Inuit drawings that illustrated the most significant factors in their lives: people, their clothing and homes, hunting techniques, and the creatures they depended upon for their survival. The former was based on a foreigner’s imagination, fuelled by nationalism and chauvinism; the latter on a lifetime of experience and cultural pride.

According to Barry Lopez, the aim of Euro-American dramatization of the Arctic landscape was to establish an *ilira*—an unconscious “fear that accompanies awe.”²² Initially, the scene was dream-like, but in 1854, the Arctic took on a nightmarish quality when it was reported that the Franklin expedition had died of scurvy and starvation—with evidence of cannibalism.²³ As the horror of the expedition’s fate began to register in the literary world, some authors resorted to melodramatic exaggerations to turn fear into terror. One of the more spectacular examples appeared in the preface to an American novel, *The Polar Hunters*, published in 1917:

It is a world of evil magic, that world of the Frozen North, where the terrible conditions of life bring about an unparalleled conflict between Man and the Demons of Hunger and of Cold. It is a war against Titans, and Titans have been defeated. Every incident in that grim

struggle thrills with danger and excitement, every detail of life is weird and strange.²⁴

While admitting that much of his knowledge of the Arctic came from the American Museum of Natural History, the author went on to describe the feat of planting the Stars and Stripes at the North Pole as “the most stupendous geographical triumph in the world ... achieved by an American for Americans,” with reference to the “scores of unburied skeletons ... on the unknown shores or beneath the eternal ice.” He also emphasized that “the secret of the Arctic lies hid in the life of the Eskimo, in the understanding of whom, American scientists and American explorers stand foremost.” Embodied here are the key elements that fired the imagination of the Victorian Age: sublime imagery, mystery, conquest, heroism, and national pride.

Although most British authors tended to be more restrained, Charles Dickens was less so, employing rhetorical vernacular to its extreme in his essays on the Arctic appearing in the magazine *Household Words*.²⁵ Other poets, novelists, journalists, and artists added their own interpretations, until the public became “instant authorities” on the mysterious Arctic they had never seen, nor expected to see. Chauncey Loomis suggests that “their imagined Arctic was a place of terror, but even in its terror it was beautiful in the sublime way that immense mountains or the vast reaches of space are beautiful.”²⁶ Not surprisingly, Arctic fiction found a ready market with adventures more exciting and bizarre than those of the explorers, as in Percy St. John’s *The Arctic Crusoe* and Jules Verne’s epic tale of Arctic adventure that climaxed with Captain Hatteras planting the Union Jack on an erupting volcano at the North Pole.²⁷

Questions about accuracy were raised, particularly with regard to the sensational journalism appearing in the New York dailies after the United States joined in the search for the Franklin expedition. The American public thrived on excitement, and Arctic stories sold papers. Understandably, editors began inserting misleading headlines to appease the public’s insatiable appetite. Only rarely was there an attempt to correct false impressions. As a case in point, Lieutenant Doane, the United States commander of an unsuccessful attempt to colonize Ellesmere Island, wrote a rather cynical report that mysteriously found its way into *The Chicago Times* on 6 April 1881:

We did but little, but left a great many things undone requiring some more courage to refrain from doing. We did not change the names of all the localities visited, as is customary, nor give them new latitudes.... We did not erect cenotaphs.... We received no flags, converted no natives, killed no one....²⁸

In a few cases, the explorers themselves were to blame for exaggerated accounts, such as the Fifth Earl of Lonsdale, who became known as an

unscrupulous storyteller. Ultimately, the bitter feud between Peary and Cook over who had reached the North Pole in 1909 would cast further doubts about the veracity of explorers' claims and exploits.²⁹ Even then, it was difficult to wean the public from its long-held images of the Arctic and its heroes.

Inaccurate impressions of the Arctic and its indigenous peoples persisted well into the twentieth century, with Vilhjalmur Stefansson arguing that the Arctic landscape was still viewed by most as "a lifeless waste of eternal silence" inhabited only by a few "Eskimos, the filthiest and most benighted people on earth, pushed there by more powerful nations farther south, and eking out a miserable existence amidst hardship."³⁰ Yet his own attempts to alter these misconceptions in *The Friendly Arctic* were generally unsuccessful, since he too had resorted to "narrative manipulation" and fabrication to please his publishers, a fact that did not go unnoticed by his peers.³¹

The depiction of the Esquimaux of Northern Greenland as "wild and uncouth"³² and living in "filthy squalor"³³ seemed more a legacy from Martin Frobisher's accounts of beast-like cannibals³⁴ than from the descriptions by British Admiralty explorers such as Ross, Parry, Lyon, and McClintock, or those of earlier missionaries and traders settling in Greenland and Labrador. Similarly, there is little mention of the eighteenth-century Hudson's Bay supply ships to York Factory, or the extensive whaling activities in Davis Strait reaching Lancaster Sound by the early 1820s. Images of peaceful Inuit, living alongside Europeans and at times bearing their children,³⁵ were not compatible with the concept of a heroic Arctic explorer. As one might expect, most fictional accounts would adopt the negative image.

Nor is there mention in the nineteenth-century narratives of those Inuit taken to Britain a century earlier, in some cases for schooling.³⁶ In one instance, Mikak, a young Inuk woman who created a sensation in London in 1768, returned to Labrador and invited a visiting group of Moravian missionaries to stay. "You will see ... how well we will behave, if you will only come. We will love you as our countrymen, and trade with you justly, and treat you kindly."³⁷ For the most part, Inuit visiting Britain in the late eighteenth century were treated well. Some received invitations to meet with royalty and were dressed suitably for the occasion. Others taken later for "exhibition" purposes were not so fortunate. The few who survived—most did not—invariably requested to return home as soon as possible.³⁸

By comparison, Inuit stories included many references to the first arrivals of the Qallunaat, literally translated to mean "the men of heavy eyebrows."³⁹ Initially, the Inuit thought the strangers and their ships were supernatural, and sought protection from their shamans. When the whaling ships reached Lancaster Sound in the 1820s, for example, the Inuit at Pond Inlet believed the

men “had come to murder them,” perhaps inspired by tales of the massacre by Frobisher’s men centuries earlier. The shamans were called upon to intervene and “cast a spell on the qallunaat, and they could then do nothing.”⁴⁰ Once “protected,” the Inuit welcomed the whalers and explorers because of their willingness to trade guns and goods in return for fresh food, skin clothing, information, and other assistance. Eventually, the Inuit would become active participants in the whaling industry, with the men acting as “whaling mates” or manning the whale boats and the women providing “friendship” and warm clothing for the captains and their crews.⁴¹ The shamans’ role changed too. By the mid-1800s, when the whaling ships appeared on the horizon, their chants summoned the whales to ensure there would be plenty to harvest.⁴² The Inuit benefitted greatly from the trade for guns and ammunition. The whalers profited commercially, and those who wintered over would depend entirely upon the Inuit for clothing and food. What existed was a state of “co-dependence.”

Most British explorers tended to ignore or minimize the impact of European whalers on the lives of the Inuit. Captain Leopold McClintock, for example, made only passing reference to the whaling ships in his published chronicle,⁴³ but gave detailed descriptions of the various natives he encountered and their living conditions. He commended the Danes for their colonial policy in Greenland, noting particularly their generous assistance to the “Esquimaux” in times of distress and their apparent success in teaching them to read and write. His criticism of British policy was clear:

Have we English done as much for the aborigines in any of our numerous colonies, even in far more favoured climes? We have thousands of Esquimaux within our own territories of Labrador and of the Hudson’s Bay Company, have we ever attempted to do anything for their welfare?—and thousands more of them inhabit the north shore of Hudson’s Strait and the west shore of Davis’ Strait, within three weeks’ sail of us, and in annual communication with our whaling ships.⁴⁴

McClintock seemed convinced that colonial government was beneficial to the native peoples. As an example, when he described the unhealthy living conditions at a Moravian mission settlement near Godthaab, he noted that this community was “not subject to Danish authority.” Similarly, he reported being repulsed by the “filth and wretchedness” of the Esquimaux dwellings at Etah in North Greenland, but he was quick to suggest that the “degraded” condition of these people was a result of them being completely isolated from the more civilized settlements in southern Greenland.⁴⁵

In spite of his charge of British neglect, McClintock found the Inuit of North Baffin to be “better-looking, cleaner, and more robust” than he had expected.⁴⁶

More importantly, they possessed an unusual memory for detail, as illustrated in their descriptions of distant shipwrecks that occurred decades earlier and of Sir Edward Parry's winter at Igloolik in 1822-1823. Perhaps even more surprising was their knowledge of Dr. John Rae's stay two years earlier at Repulse Bay, some five hundred miles away.⁴⁷

Alas, not everyone was willing to accept the inherent accuracy of the Inuit oral tradition. When Dr. John Rae recounted Inuit reports of cannibalism among the last survivors of the Franklin Expedition, he was ostracized by British officials and the London press for daring to suggest that members of the Admiralty were capable of such dishonourable conduct. The Inuit were declared unreliable: in the words of Charles Dickens, they were no more than a "handful of uncivilized people, with a domesticity of blood and blubber."⁴⁸

Americans as well were quick to discredit Inuit testimony. In 1873, for instance, the United States Secretary of the Navy turned a blind eye to statements by a trusted Inuk guide who claimed that the veteran explorer Charles Francis Hall had died of arsenic poisoning at the hands of his crew. In the national interest, a far more honourable explanation was "death by natural causes."⁴⁹ As a consequence, the significance of accuracy in the Inuit oral tradition would be ignored for many decades to come. Yet accurate and precise detail was of critical importance to preserve the ancient legends that formed the foundation of Inuit culture and identity. As Petrone explained in *Northern Voices*,

In ancient times the word was sacrosanct. It embodied the very essence of being. And it carried the power to make things happen. Through this sacred power, the Inuit sought to shape and control the cosmic forces that govern human life.⁵⁰

There were serious attempts in the nineteenth century to record the ancient legends, notably by Dr. Henry Rink, Charles Francis Hall, and Franz Boas. Dr. Rink, a Danish scientist/explorer and later Governor of South Greenland, collected over five hundred legends and stories, filling over two thousand sheets of manuscript. Some were recorded as early as 1823 by Greenland Esquimaux, a testimony to the advanced educational opportunities provided under Danish rule. Noting only minor regional differences, Rink found distinct similarities in the legends told in the isolated Inuit communities of Greenland compared to those recorded in northern Labrador.⁵¹ Almost a century later, Knud Rasmussen would find similar themes in legends elsewhere in the Canadian Arctic during his travels from east to west with the Fifth Thule Expedition.⁵²

Stories of more recent times dating back several hundreds of years were also preserved through the Inuit oral tradition of storytelling. Even today, they provide rich historical detail not found in the writings of western civilization. In the 1970s, for example, elders in Arctic Bay told stories about the Tuniit,

recognized by anthropologists as belonging to the Dorset culture who were thought to have disappeared around 1300 A.D. By their description, the Tuniit were larger and stronger than the Inuit; they lived in small stone houses, wore parkas almost to the ground, carried their fire around their waists when hunting, and had very few material possessions. One elder also described how some Tuniit lived alongside Inuit families on Bylot Island until they were driven away to the north, possibly to Greenland.⁵³

Attempts by Qallunaat to record the ancient legends were not always successful. To gain Inuit trust required living among them for extended periods of time and learning their language. Even then, translating an Inuit story into English was difficult since Inuktitut is a language of phrases and ideas, rather than of words and structural sentences.

Also complicating early translations was a tendency for Inuit to defer to the Qallunaat and tell them only what they wanted to hear. Usually described as simply not wishing to “offend,” recent studies point to a long-standing Inuit tradition of dealing with any uneasiness about people or situations. In Inuktitut, such fears were called *ilira*, and the ancient legends taught the Inuit to respond by either withdrawing from the situation or showing “love” in order to appease the one who had instilled the fear. This latter response was known as *nagli* but was perceived by many Qallunaat as a “willingness to comply.”⁵⁴ Although this form of response provided the Inuit with unusual self-control over mind and body when faced with perceived danger, present-day scholars and Inuit themselves are wondering if this response may have worked against them in dealing with the Qallunaat.⁵⁵

A number of factors in the Inuit oral tradition encouraged consistency and accuracy. Storytelling and songs were considered means of educating the young, and as Alootook Ipellie argues, the raconteur was required to have a phenomenal memory to ensure strict accuracy and attention to detail.⁵⁶ Over a century earlier, Dr. Henry Rink had made a similar observation:

The art requires the ancient tales to be related as nearly as possible in the words of the original version, with only a few arbitrary reiterations, and otherwise only varied according to the individual talents of the narrator, as to the mode of recitation, gesture, &c.... Generally, even the smallest deviation from the original version will be taken notice of and corrected, if any intelligent person happens to be present.⁵⁷

Thus, while not everyone was considered a qualified storyteller, all were taught as children to value the importance of accuracy.

Although there is no evidence of egocentrism in their legends and stories, the Inuit certainly believed in the superiority of their own race. Generally, they thought the white men were “restless, time-obsessed, overweening, moody,

totally lacking in manners, and boorish.”⁵⁸ The problem, as explained to Knud Rasmussen, was that the white man and the Indian were offspring of an Inuit woman mated with a dog. The young were placed in a leaky boat that required constant bailing, and it was thought this might explain the “peculiarity of white men who are always in a hurry and have much to do.” Moreover, it was thought that

... white men have quite the same minds as small children. Therefore one should always give way to them. They are easily angered, and when they cannot get their way they are moody and, like children, have the strangest ideas and fancies.⁵⁹

Another Inuk was more generous in his views, explaining to Rasmussen that “we have our customs, which are not the same as those of the white men, the white men who live in another land and have need of other ways.”⁶⁰

The Arctic exploration narratives generally confirmed this attitude of superiority, although each interpretation varies. Dr. Elisha Kane in *Arctic Explorations*, for instance, related his first meeting with Greenland Esquimaux by describing them as “fearless,” showing “no apprehension of violence from us,” and in fact “laughing heartily at our ignorance in not understanding them.”⁶¹ Lest they would think the explorers inferior, Dr. Kane declared it was critical to impose fear among the natives in order to gain their respect.⁶² As a result of his actions, the natives deserted the ice-bound crew, who nearly starved to death as a consequence. Six years later, Captain McClintock observed a similar attitude among the Inuit of King William Island, claiming there was “not a trace of fear” even among the children.⁶³

Evidence that the feeling of superiority persisted well into the twentieth century is found in the notebook of a Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officer who was stationed in the Eastern Arctic from 1922-1935.

At the back of the Eskimo mind, although seldom expressed, is a feeling of his superiority over the white man, and a belief we can show them nothing in connection with their country and animals which they do not know. There is a latent fear of us, deadened by contact, reduced by fair treatment, and almost turned into contempt by over familiarity, but always in existence. They have a strong opinion that we should not interfere too much in their affairs, and we should not unless necessary.⁶⁴

Corporal McInnes also wrote that he believed the Inuit to be “the most ethical, the most moral, and the most communal people” he had ever met, and “better developed mentally than other people,” with a “higher system of philosophy” than that of western civilization.⁶⁵ Alooook Ipellie, writing in 1992, confirms the high moral principles and caring among his people:

Even though Inuit lived in one of the world's most inhospitable climates, they remained people warm of heart and always ready to help anyone struggling with life. If the art of human relations were to be measured among all peoples on the planet earth, Inuit would score high on a list of those expert at caring for their fellow beings. This is not surprising, given the fact they have always relied on one another to survive the forces of nature.⁶⁶

Yet many Arctic explorers, Elisha Kane in particular, believed that Inuit assistance could only be acquired through manipulation, cunning, and the promise of material goods.

So entranced with the achievements of their polar heroes, the public accepted as fact the many misconceptions written about the Inuit. This was particularly true for the younger generation, for whom the exploration narratives held a special appeal. In Britain, special editions were published as prizes for boys' grammar and public schools, with the school emblem etched in gold on the leather cover: as in an 1894 edition of Kane's *Arctic Explorations* (Wolverley Grammar School) or the abridged 1876 version by M. Jones, *Dr. Kane: the Arctic Hero* (Park School, Glasgow). In the United States, a number of children's editions were published by religious organizations, such as Captain William Scoresby's *The Arctic Regions*. Only a few books were written solely to inform about geographical and scientific facts, as was the case with Ascott Hope's *Wonders of the Ice World*. Stories about conquering nature, of courageous heroes with strong moral character, and of death-defying adventures in a fairy-tale land of icebergs, polar bears, and primitive "Esquimaux" were all part of a young boy's education.

Some publishers sought to attract youthful readers by fictionalizing history. In the case of *Uncle Richard's Voyages for the Discovery of a Northwest Passage*, published in 1826, the anonymous author relates his stories as if he had accompanied such explorers as Parry, Lyon, Franklin in his overland expedition, and even Captain Cochrane in his travels to Siberia. He makes no pretence of his purpose, stating in the Preface that he hoped his young readers would be impressed by his conviction, "that courage, resolution and perseverance, will support men through toils and dangers, and enable them to act an honourable and useful part in the service of their country."⁶⁷ Fiction and non-fiction alike were accompanied by imaginative etchings of grotesque icebergs, eerie illuminated skies, fierce bears and walruses, and all sorts of mysterious land forms.

By far the most injurious consequences of a vivid imagination were the misconceptions created in the young mind concerning the indigenous people of the Arctic. None were more misleading or vicious than the descriptions of the "Esquimaux" found in *Uncle Richard's Voyages*. Described repeatedly as

“savages,” the women in particular were characterized as “disgusting,”⁶⁸ “poor wretches”⁶⁹ covered with a “coating of blood, grease and dirt.”⁷⁰ To show the ultimate in degradation, the author repeats a story about how one woman had offered to give him her child in exchange for a knife.⁷¹ He also claimed that the Esquimaux “shewed utter selfishness and insensibility to each other’s sufferings,”⁷² and declared that “the old women are so truly hideous, with inflamed eyes, wrinkled skin, and black teeth, that I am not at all surprised at former voyagers reporting they had seen witches on this shore.”⁷³ With such images, the youth of nineteenth-century Britain and America could not help but be convinced of the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race and its Arctic heroes.

Although none were quite comparable to *Uncle Richard’s Voyages*, many Arctic adventure novels appeared in the mid- to late 1800s, each providing inaccurate images of both the land and its peoples. Several were written by R. M. Ballantyne, the son of a wealthy Scot, but who had spent a few years in Canada with the Hudson’s Bay Company. Apparently, he had never been north of York Factory, yet this prolific writer of boys’ stories set a number of his tales in the Arctic, notably *Fast in the Ice*, *Ungava: A Tale of Esquimaux-Land*, and *The World of Ice*. Numerous editions appeared in both Britain and the United States, reaching many generations of young readers on both sides of the Atlantic. Although slightly milder in tone, Ballantyne would reinforce Uncle Richard’s image of the Inuit as primitive savages, describing them as “fat, dirty and oily”⁷⁴ and, in one instance, “creeping on their hands and knees” out of their igloos “like dark hairy monsters.”⁷⁵ These and other books would leave behind a trail of misconceptions to be absorbed by the fertile minds of impressionable youth.

By the turn of the century, the original exploration narratives were often abridged and/or combined into anthologies. They still retained much of the distorted imagery, but were often written in a more simplistic style, as in William H. Wharton’s *Thrilling Tales of the Frozen North* or Irving Crump’s *The Boys’ Book of Arctic Exploration*. These adventure stories continued to extol the virtues of courage and manliness, as did W. H. G. Kingston’s *Arctic Adventures* or Kirk Munroe’s *Under the Great Bear*. By the twentieth century, many younger children became armchair participants in imaginary Arctic adventures, in works such as G. Harvey Ralphson’s *Boy Scouts Beyond the Arctic Circle: Or, The Lost Expedition* and Milton Richard’s *Dick Kent with the Eskimos*. For older boys, Oxley’s *North Overland with Franklin* and Munn’s *Tales of the Eskimo: Being Impressions of a Strenuous, Indomitable, and Cheerful Little People* would add further imaginative distortions of historical fact.

Once the North Pole had been “conquered” in 1908-1909, most adult literature seemed to take on a somewhat more subdued tone. Although fascination with the Arctic continued unabated throughout the first half of the

twentieth century, it was now shared by more Canadians—both readers and writers. Following the Great War, British and American Arctic expeditions, once a source of intense national pride, were replaced by annual Canadian patrols with RCMP aboard to maintain sovereignty. For the same reason, new laws were introduced requiring explorers to obtain permission from the Canadian government. The major explorations of this period were Stefansson's Canadian Arctic Expedition (1913-1918), followed by Rasmussen's Danish Fifth Thule Expedition, and attempts by Admiral Byrd to fly over the North Pole. The whaling industry was finished and replaced by the fur trade, which was soon dominated by the Hudson's Bay Company. As a sign of the times, Qallunaat women now appeared in the Arctic, either as nurses or wives of missionaries.

Subtle changes were also taking place in the written narratives. Not surprisingly, autobiographical narratives of "lesser" men and women began to dominate Arctic literature, written by RCMP officers, missionaries, fur traders, geologists, bush pilots, and nurses. There were still numerous stories about the more exalted—the Arctic aviators, sailing captains, and scientists—but when accompanied by black-and-white photographs, these books seemed to make the Arctic less mysterious and terrifying. Canadian artists also began to take an interest in the Arctic landscape, but, with the exception of Lawren Harris's icebergs, the paintings of the Group of Seven and Maurice Haycock tended to portray a more gentle scene. Even the black-and-white, silent movies taken during the annual Eastern Arctic Patrol seemed to reduce the polar bears, musk oxen, and walruses to a reasonable size. The Arctic seemed less threatening, but the romantic image still predominated.

For the first half of the twentieth century, the Inuit were still viewed as curiosities—a quaint and happy people, who seemed to thrive in an environment most southerners found too rigorous and formidable. In this context, Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* was filmed to fit the existing stereotype, rather than reality. Written narratives tended to support this image, with Peter Freuchen and Vilhjalmur Stefansson being the most prolific authors of adult literature. New children's fiction such as *Etu: Our Little Eskimo Cousin*⁷⁶ and *Brother Eskimo*⁷⁷ tended to be less racist but still patronizing, as were stories by the missionaries, such as *Dwellers in Arctic Night*⁷⁸ and *By Eskimo Dogsled and Kayak: A Description of a Missionary's Experiences and Adventures in Labrador*.⁷⁹ As long as the churches were willing to educate and the Hudson's Bay Company provided an economic base, there was little reason for public concern. In fact, the "noble savage" image seemed quite appropriate to the romanticized image of a pristine Arctic environment. Few anticipated that the image might someday turn into one of "the noble victim."⁸⁰

Although anthropological studies pointed to the existence of a unique and distinct culture spread across the Arctic, most scholars and scientists did not think it could survive the dominant influence of western civilization. Most assumed that absorption and assimilation were inevitable, that after learning to read and write, the “primitive” natives would share in the future prosperity of the Canadian nation and likely move south by choice. Few, if any, saw Christianity as a threat to the Inuit oral tradition, to their culture, their history, and their identity. Yet, when the Inuit cast aside their beliefs in shamans and spirits, they inadvertently diminished the significance of the ancient legends and the moral principles that had guided their social behaviour for over a millennium. Syllabics began to replace the oral tradition, but the Inuit elders were slow to recognize the effect this would have on storytelling. The younger Inuit, however, were being educated under the direction of the missionaries, who encouraged them to forget their language and all practices associated with their pagan past. Thus, the *ilira*, which still unconsciously guided Inuit behaviour, would deter serious thoughts of transferring the ancient legends and stories to paper lest it offend their teachers.⁸¹

Unexpectedly, the legends and teachings of the oral tradition did not disappear, partly as a result of Inuit paintings and carvings, which allowed expression of the spirituality that had once dominated their lives. Other changes that took place following the Second World War caused severe social dislocation in family life, particularly the residential school system and the transference of tuberculosis (TB) patients to southern sanatoriums. Newcomers arrived to participate in military defence and mining activities, but they also brought alcohol, then drugs, to the once remote Inuit communities. Some Inuit adjusted—some did not. To the surprise of many Qallunaat, however, Inuit culture and identity survived.

Meanwhile, the Canadian public was still entranced with a romantic image of its Arctic and was thus quite content to believe government reports of great progress in bringing education and health services to the indigenous peoples. Photographic essay books and more autobiographies flooded the bookshelves. A few writers, like Richard Finnie and Farley Mowat, attempted to defy the romantic myth and suggested there might be problems hidden in the isolated north. Most Canadians were reluctant to listen. Although James Houston and Harold Horwood successfully placed the Inuit at the centres of their novels, it was not until scheduled air flights and television documentaries brought the Arctic more directly in contact with southerners that the romantic illusions slowly gave way to concerns about the fragile Arctic environment and the indigenous people who lived there.

By the 1980s, it was apparent that Inuit culture and identity had not only survived but were enjoying a rebirth as Inuit leaders sought to rebuild self-confidence and pride among their people. Through local initiatives such as the Committee for Original Peoples' Entitlement (COPE) and the North Baffin oral history projects, there was a concerted effort to seek out the wisdom of the elders and record their stories on tape. Some have appeared in anthologies, like *We Don't Live in Snow Houses Now: Reflections of Arctic Bay*. Others have provided important resource material for new histories, as in the case of Dorothy Harley Eber's *When the Whalers Were Up North: Inuit Memories from the Eastern Arctic*. New publications, by Inuit for Inuit, such as *Inuktitut*, *Inuit Today*, and *Inuit Fiction Magazine*, were initiated as means to encourage young Inuit to write their own stories and poetry, in Inuktitut, English, and, in some cases, French. A few began to write full-length books. Some were autobiographical, like *I, Nuligak* or Armand Tagoona's *Shadows*; others were fictional, such as Markoosie Patsauq's *Harpoon of the Hunter*.

Ancient legends and more recent stories also began to appear in print; some were edited by southerners, as in the case of Robin Gedalof's *Paper Stays Put: A Collection of Inuit Writing*, or Penny Petrone's *Northern Voices: Inuit Writings in English*; others were collaborative efforts, such as Pitseolak and Eber's *People from Our Side: A Life Story with Photographs and Oral Biography* or Nungak and Arima's *Inuit Stories: Povungnituk*. Sometimes, new stories and interpretations were added, as in the case of Alootook Ipellie's *Arctic Dreams and Nightmares*. In school texts, Qallunaat stories were replaced with stories written and illustrated by Inuit. Even adult storytelling experienced a revival.

The spirituality that was so central to the old stories is taking on new significance and meaning. A new pride in Inuit culture is emerging and with it, self-confidence and self-respect. In the words of Penny Petrone, author of *Northern Voices*,

Much of this ancient folklore has been lost over the years and much of what has survived is fragmented. Although oral narrative was literature in performance that to a large extent defined its form and content, the extant corpus, even on the printed page, is testimony to a rich, precious birthright that is still a great source of spiritual energy and physical strength.⁸²

From the beginning of time, spirituality had placed respect for the environment at the cornerstone of Inuit culture. Rebirth of that spirituality, in whatever form is acceptable to the Inuit people, may succeed in reinforcing the very foundations of their culture and ensure the survival of their fragile environment.

Only a century ago, the exploration narratives were considered by Euro-Americans to be the core of Arctic history. Today, there is still a fascination with

the Arctic, but the character of the narratives is changing. National pride is now shared by Canadians, Danes, or Alaskan-Americans, and often challenged in a new genre of socio-political critiques. Many popular historians have included the Arctic in their repertoires, whereas professional historians are still rewriting traditional tales of discovery: Clive Holland's *Farthest North* and John Geiger and Owen Beattie's *Dead Silence: The Greatest Mystery in Arctic Discovery* as examples. Others, like David C. Woodman in *Unravelling the Franklin Mystery: Inuit Testimony*, are attempting to include Inuit voices in exploration history.

New autobiographies of Arctic experiences such as Donald Marsh's *Echoes from a Frozen Land* and J. Dewey Soper's *Canadian Arctic Recollections: Baffin Island, 1923-1931* suggest readers are still fascinated by real-life experiences, but there appears to be even greater interest in Arctic fiction and poetry. Here the imagination seems to reside more in the creative talents of the writer, as in Aritha van Herk's *Places Far from Ellesmere*, rather than in a deliberate distortion of the landscape. In the field of historical fiction, Rudy Wiebe was singularly successful in placing the indigenous peoples at the centre of Franklin's overland expedition in *A Discovery of Strangers*, and Peter Høeg's *Smilla's Sense of Snow* focuses on the present by exploring Greenland's cross-cultural disorientation in a mystery novel of suspense and science fiction intrigue. Meanwhile, countless coffee-table books still appear every Christmas, full of magnificent colour photographs of the Arctic landscape that reflect an ongoing Canadian fascination with the Arctic sublime and "ultima thule," although many now focus more on the Inuit, their communities, and their history. More thoughtful writers, notably Barry Lopez in *Arctic Dreams* and John Moss in *Enduring Dreams: An Exploration of Arctic Landscape*, are forcing us to look inward, outward, and backward, to find new meaning in the Arctic imagery that was once rooted in western culture.

Like the ancient folklore of the Inuit, the Qallunaat history of the Arctic has also been fragmented, with the once-dominant exploration history now sharing honours with whaling, fur trade, missionary, military, economic, social, and political history. Yet many scholars now recognize that an all-inclusive Arctic history is impossible as long as the indigenous peoples remain on the periphery rather than at the core. Someday, and hopefully in the not-too-distant future, a truly comprehensive Arctic history will emerge with the indigenous peoples at the centre, written by an Inuk, and incorporating only those Qallunaat histories considered meaningful to the Inuit. Until then, there will continue to be two Arctic histories, two forms of Arctic narrative, and two distinct cultural perceptions—one still influenced by imagination, the other by spirituality.

Notes

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- ³ Hugh Brody, *Living Arctic: Hunters of the Canadian North* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1987), 73.
- ⁴ Ruth Annaqtuusi Tulurialik, "The Fish Story," in *Qikaaluktut: Images of Inuit Life*, ed. Ruth Annaqtuusi Tulurialik and David F. Pelly (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1986).
- ⁵ Rasing, 'Too Many People', 72.
- ⁶ Penny Petrone, ed., *Northern Voices: Inuit Writing in English* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 4.
- ⁷ Dr. Henry Rink, *Tales and Traditions of the Eskimo*, 2nd ed. (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1875), 59-60.
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- ⁹ Rasing, 'Too Many People', 117-132; Rink, *Tales and Traditions of the Eskimo*, 32-35.
- ¹⁰ Rink, *Tales and Traditions of the Eskimo*, 36-37.
- ¹¹ Archibald Fleming, 1917, 112. *Editor's note*: Incomplete citation in the original.
- ¹² Quoted in Fred Bruemmer, *The Arctic World* (Toronto: Key Porter, 1985), 144.
- ¹³ Fred Bruemmer, *The Arctic* (New York: Quadrangle, 1974), 61.
- ¹⁴ Bruemmer, *The Arctic*, 29-42.
- ¹⁵ Chauncey Loomis, "The Arctic Sublime," in *Nature and the Victorian Imagination*, eds. U. C. Knoepfelmacher and G. B. Tennyson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 101.
- ¹⁶ Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer*, 14.
- ¹⁷ John Moss, "Imagining the Arctic: From Frankenstein to Farley Mowat," *Arctic Circle* (March/April 1991): 37.
- ¹⁸ I. S. Maclaren, "The Aesthetic Map of the North, 1845-1859," *Arctic* 38, no. 2 (June 1985): 89-90.
- ¹⁹ Charles Ede, *The Home Amid the Snow (or) Warm Hearts in Cold Regions* (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1878), 12.
- ²⁰ Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer*, 17.
- ²¹ F. Leopold McClintock, *The Voyage of the Fox in the Arctic Seas in Search of Franklin and His Companions*, 5th ed. (London: John Murray, 1881); Elisha Kent Kane, *Arctic Explorations in Search of Sir John Franklin* (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1894).
- ²² Barry Lopez, *Arctic Dreams: Imagination and Desire in a Northern Landscape* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1986), 7.
- ²³ Loomis, "The Arctic Sublime," 98-105.

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- ²⁴ Francis Rolt-Wheeler, *The Polar Hunters* (Boston: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1917), 15.
- ²⁵ Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer*, 27.
- ²⁶ Loomis, "The Arctic Sublime," 110.
- ²⁷ Jules Verne, *The Desert of Ice; or the Further Adventures of Captain Hatteras* (Philadelphia: Porter and Coates, 1874).
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- ²⁹ Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer*, 136-137.
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- ³³ M. Jones, *Dr. Kane, the Arctic Hero: A Narrative of His Adventures and Explorations in the Polar Regions* (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1876), 34.
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- ³⁶ Petrone, *Northern Voices*, 57-59.
- ³⁷ Petrone, *Northern Voices*, 60.
- ³⁸ Petrone, *Northern Voices*, 57-65.
- ³⁹ Petrone, *Northern Voices*, 57.
- ⁴⁰ Dorothy Harley Eber, *When the Whalers Were Up North: Inuit Memories from the Eastern Arctic* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), 5.
- ⁴¹ Eber, *When the Whalers Were Up North*, 28.
- ⁴² Eber, *When the Whalers Were Up North*, 16.
- ⁴³ F. Leopold McClintock, *The Voyage of the 'Fox' in the Arctic Seas: A Narrative of the Discovery of the Fate of Sir John Franklin and his Companions*, 5th ed. (London: John Murray, 1881), 19, 101, 126.
- ⁴⁴ McClintock, *The Voyage of the 'Fox'*, 13.
- ⁴⁵ McClintock, *The Voyage of the 'Fox'*, 114.
- ⁴⁶ McClintock, *The Voyage of the 'Fox'*, 136.
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- ⁴⁸ Loomis, "The Arctic Sublime," 108.
- ⁴⁹ Petrone, *Northern Voices*, 69-71.
- ⁵⁰ Petrone, *Northern Voices*, 4.
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- ⁵² Petrone, *Northern Voices*, 3.
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- ⁵⁴ Rasing, *'Too Many People'*, 110-116.

- ⁵⁵ Rasing, 'Too Many People', 271; Arnakallak, in North Baffin Oral History Project (NBOHP) 1994—Parks Canada and GNWT, a collection of oral histories from Pond Inlet (unpublished).
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- ⁵⁹ Bruemmer, *The Arctic*, 200.
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- ⁶¹ Kane, *Arctic Explorations*, 120-121.
- ⁶² Kane, *Arctic Explorations*, 260-264.
- ⁶³ McClintock, 227.
- ⁶⁴ Finley McInnes, *Papers*, C/3/1.
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- ⁶⁷ Anonymous, *Northern Regions: A Relation of Uncle Richard's Voyages for the Discovery of a North-west Passage, and an Account of the Overland Journeys of Other Enterprising Travellers* (London: J. Harris, 1826), A2.
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5

Arctic Wilderness—And Other Mythologies

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From the time of [Pytheas] the Greek through to the mid-twentieth century, Europeans envisioned the Arctic as a wilderness, a place of the unknown – cold, mysterious, forbidding, inhabited by wild beasts, yet magnificent in its grandeur – bereft of Western civilization. Although this image has moderated over time, many southern Canadians still think of the Arctic as wilderness. Inuit, meanwhile, have held and continue to hold a much different view of their homelands. They do not set themselves apart from the natural world, but see the Arctic as a single entity encompassing land, sea, sky, as well as Inuit, birds, animals, marine life, vegetation, weather and even the spirits who once guided the destiny of their ancestors. The environment is the very essence of their being, a concept at odds with the anthropocentric views of the Western world that set humans apart from, and dominant over, nature.

Predictably, these perceptual differences have led to political tensions, initially between Inuit and governments over exploitation of resources, but more recently with environmentalists who have campaigned to make vast wilderness areas into national parks to prevent future development. Particularly contentious is the idea that preservation of arctic wildlife must include a ban on Inuit hunting and fishing, as proposed at a recent wilderness symposium.¹ Inuit leaders believe that the arctic resources, which have sustained their people for more than a thousand years, must be responsibly utilized to ensure cultural and economic survival into the next millennium. At issue is the question of ownership and control over the arctic lands and their resources. Today, the Inuit of the central and eastern Arctic refer to their ancestral lands as *Nunavut* or *Nunavik*,² meaning “our land,” in response to those who would call them Crown lands.

Also at issue is the definition of “wilderness.” From an Inuk’s perspective, the concept of the Arctic as wilderness is a figment of an outsider’s imagination, unsupported by history or experience. Although most Inuit now live in isolated

communities, ancient tent rings and other artifacts scattered over the treeless tundra attest to the vast territory once occupied by their Thule ancestors and by the Palaeo-Eskimos who preceded them. Only the northwestern limits of the Arctic Archipelago were relatively unknown to these people.³ Thus, to qualify as wilderness, one must erase not only the Inuit people from the landscape, but all traces of their history as well.

Equally suspect by Inuit interpretation is the "Myth of the North," a belief held by many southern Canadians that "the North has somehow imparted a unique quality to the character of the nation."⁴ In an Inuk's mind, the Arctic is the heart and soul of their own identity, yet rarely if ever have their people figured prominently in nationalist rhetoric about a "northern nation," or in intellectual discourse on the Myth of the North. How, for instance, could their homeland affect the collective identity of Canadians, when the vast majority have never visited the Arctic, let alone lived there? Nor has the "North" beyond Inuit homelands and hunting grounds had a significant impact on their lives. Major changes in their lives have come from the South, wrought by people, not by the land.⁵ Thus, from an Inuit perspective, the Myth of the North cannot play a role in defining national identity unless they and other northern Native peoples were central to that myth. Even today, they are not. In this sense, the two myths – the Arctic Wilderness Myth and the Myth of the North – are interconnected in that they have both ignored a vital Inuit presence when appropriating the arctic landscape into a southern vision.

In 1967, Northrop Frye saw the absence of humans from landscape imagery as a peculiarly Canadian phenomenon and suggested that "perhaps the real Canada is an ideal with nobody in it."⁶ Others have explored this thesis in more specific terms. Jonathan Bordo, in "Jack Pine – Wilderness Sublime or the Erasure of the Aboriginal Presence From the Landscape," describes how Canadian landscape artists systematically eliminated the indigenous people from their representation of wilderness areas along the Laurentian Shield.⁷ Richard Cavell in "White Technologies" examines the "Canadian obsession with the North," arguing that northern narratives "imagine a technospace that is dehumanized, displaced, gendered as male, and problematically othered as white."⁸ Amanda Graham claims that "the symbolic, mythic, national North is not the same as the physical, geographic North where people live and have lived," and that "new representations must supersede the old." She also gives fair warning:

The North – as region, as breeder of weather, as myth – plays an exceedingly important role in Canadian identity; our northern landscape has made us not-Americans, has distinguished us from them, and has imparted something special to us. This belief obstructs

historical understanding by creating a psychological unwillingness to expose the myth to critical scholarship.... To examine the myth too closely might be to destroy it altogether, and with it, the identity it supports.⁹

Accepting the challenge and the caution, this paper explores the origins of the Arctic Wilderness Myth, the relevance of its images and their impact on the Inuit people, to seek redefinition of the arctic landscape.

By customary definition, myths are derived from perception rather than fact, employed to make sense of the unknown and over time accepted as truths. Myths may take the form of “stories that explain who we are or who we might wish to be.”¹⁰ They may also emerge as intangible concepts to provide distinctive identities to groups of people, cultures or nations. Identity myths are particularly invincible owing to their ability to arouse strong emotions of pride and veneration. As Alaskan historian Stephen Haycox points out, “myth and identity are closely interwoven, and people do not like to be disabused of self-images upon which they have based their lives and activities.”¹¹ By human nature, we are quick to seize upon new ideas that fit accepted beliefs, and equally reluctant to relinquish long-standing beliefs that defy logic. For many non-Native Canadians, their wilderness and northern identity myths verge on sanctity – the historical roots run deep.

The concept of wilderness as a place beyond “civilization”¹² was imported to North America by Europeans in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The old Anglo-Saxon idea of *wildeor-ness* as “a place of wild beasts”¹³ evolved into an exaggerated imagery referred to as the “Natural Sublime,” described by Marjorie Hope Nicolson as “an asymmetry that violated all classical canons of regularity.”¹⁴ In North America, however, wilderness acquired a gentler image towards the end of the late nineteenth century, one that emphasized the natural world as a refuge from the crowded industrial centres of the United States. American writers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau and particularly John Muir depicted an idyllic vision of wilderness, offering solitude and rejuvenation. Their message spilled over into Canada as part of a wilderness appreciation movement, with both countries celebrating the existence of vast, unspoiled territory that set them apart from the Old World. Yet there were subtle differences in imagery and interpretation. In the United States, pockets of uninhabited lands could be found in almost any part of the country; in Canada, wilderness was generally to the north of settled areas.¹⁵

Attempts to redefine the meaning of wilderness have varied, ranging from Aldo Leopold’s “the raw material out of which man has hammered the artifact of civilization,”¹⁶ to a simpler notion, as expressed by Roderick Nash, that

wilderness was “uncultivated and otherwise undeveloped land” marked by “the absence of men and the presence of wild animals.”¹⁷ Yi-Fu Tuan in *Topophilia* argued that “wilderness cannot be defined objectively, it is as much a state of mind as a description of nature.”¹⁸ In terms of wilderness landscape, Douglas Porteous seemed to agree. In his opinion, “landscape, whether in the physical environment or in the form of a painting does not exist without an observer.”¹⁹ The land is real, but “the scape is a projection of human consciousness, an image received.”²⁰ Indeed, the term has now become so qualitative and internalized to reflect the feelings of individuals that Nash believes “a universally acceptable definition of wilderness is elusive.”²¹ For most Canadians, however, wilderness is North.

Although Lord Byron has been credited with inspiring the dual emotions of joy and fear in his portrayal of the Natural Sublime, the first to connect the Sublime to the polar regions was Samuel T. Coleridge’s “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” followed by Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. Chauncey Loomis, in tracing the origins and impact of the Arctic Sublime, suggests that while Shelley may have been inspired by “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” she unwittingly “anticipated the Victorian response to the Arctic by making it a setting within which human pride shows its folly in face of the immensity and inscrutability of Nature,” a setting of magnificent beauty and grandeur from which emanated a “sublime power ... to exalt the human mind and soul.”²² Published in 1818, on the eve of the British Admiralty’s renewed search for the elusive Northwest Passage, *Frankenstein* related the tale of a fictitious arctic expedition, thus setting a precedent for future interpretations of polar conquest. As Richard Cavell has suggested, “the Arctic explorers went in search of a North imagined by the poets, travelling backward in search of a myth that had preceded them.”²³

Although the first reports by polar explorers were relatively staid, science-oriented narratives, they still inspired images of dramatic landscapes and high adventure in Victorian literature and art. Survival made national heroes; new discoveries enhanced imperial ambitions. Whereas most early explorers were fascinated by the indigenous peoples of the Arctic, yet respectful of their ability to survive in such an alien environment, English writers generally portrayed them either as savage beasts or as curiosities. European landscape painters simply ignored them, focusing instead on the tall-masted ships, dwarfed against a background of gigantic icebergs, towering cliffs or snow-covered peaks. Polar exploration was aimed at conquest – not of people, but of the harsh climate, cruel seas and occasional encounters with polar bears.²⁴

The loss of the Franklin Expedition provoked a massive search involving ships from Britain, the United States, France and other European countries, inspiring

yet another flood of artistic and literary interpretation, more awe-inspiring, unearthly and terrifying than ever.²⁵ Although Jules Verne is likely credited with the most bizarre images, such as his depiction of Captain Hatteras planting the Union Jack on an erupting volcano at the North Pole,²⁶ American writers and illustrators also raised drama and imagery to great heights after their own countrymen joined the race to the Pole. By the turn of the twentieth century, the Arctic Sublime was exercised to its fullest.²⁷ Significantly, this same period saw images of the Natural Sublime diminish in representations of North American landscape, suggesting that the Arctic was not yet fully integrated into New World wilderness mythology.

In 1880, along with Britain's gift of the Arctic Islands, Canada inherited her history of polar exploration and images of the Arctic Sublime. Yet Canadian politicians showed little interest in the new acquisition until media excitement drew public attention northward, first to the Yukon gold rush and the Alaska boundary dispute, then to the Arctic, where government expeditions and mounted police sought to reinforce sovereignty. Suddenly, an arctic dimension was added to the nationalist rhetoric linking the wilderness ethos to Canada's unique identity as a northern nation.

By the 1920s, however, literary depictions of the Arctic Sublime seemed in decline, perhaps due to more frequent use of black-and-white photography that failed to replicate the dramatic landscape of earlier etchings and paintings. Inuit also appeared on the landscape, many of them smoking pipes, carrying rifles and sporting Western attire. For Canadians in particular, the scientific detail in government publications left little room for imagination, yet public demand for arctic books seemed insatiable.

Even then, the former images of the Arctic Sublime might have become history had it not been for Lawren Harris, a member of the Group of Seven landscape artists. Still recovering from a nervous breakdown, Harris had accompanied A.Y. Jackson aboard the Eastern Arctic Patrol ship in the summer of 1930 and was captivated by the mystic quality of the mountains and icebergs. His stark abstract interpretations, in brilliant hues of blues, turquoise, yellows and white, also captured the imagination of Canadians. Eli Mandel characterized Harris's icebergs as forming "a gigantic gateway to an undreamed of place and the motion toward an arch that could, completed, once and for all unify shattered things, restore peace to a broken world. Beyond such a vision there is nothing but silence."²⁸ Over time, preference for these paintings over A.Y. Jackson's depiction of sombre rust-brown hills and grey skies suggests that a reverence for the Arctic Sublime persisted deep in the Canadian psyche.

Harris's arctic experience intensified his nationalism, and he became an outspoken devotee of the Myth of the North. In "Revelation of Art in Canada,"

he refers to the Arctic as “a source of spiritual flow” for those living on “the fringe of the great North and its living whiteness, its loneliness and replenishment, its resignations and release, its call and answer – its cleansing rhythms.”²⁹ As in his paintings, the Inuit, who lived on the other side of “the fringe,” were excluded from his Myth of the North.

The Second World War and the Cold War brought airfields, weather stations, the Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line and a wide assortment of other military activities to the Arctic, leaving in their wake pockets of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and other contaminants. The United States Air Force patrolled the skies and [American] ships the arctic waters, while under the frozen seas, their submarines chased elusive Russians. Canadian Inuit, meanwhile, were catapulted into the twentieth century. Family allowances and day schools encouraged them to congregate around the trading posts. Tents and igloos were soon replaced by wooden homes, dog teams by snowmobiles and all-terrain vehicles, the Hudson’s Bay Company by Co-ops. Community life brought television, rock concerts, new diseases, junk foods, alcohol and drugs. Social problems multiplied. School programmes taught in English created language barriers between children and parents, between youth and elders. Traditional values were under siege. Not until the mid-1980s would the tide begin to turn.

In the interim, Canadian writers began to look northward in search of national identity. Some elected to follow the British tradition and revisited the saga of polar conquest: Leslie Neatby, Farley Mowat and Pierre Berton, to name only a few.³⁰ Others, like Yves Thériault, Harold Horwood and James Houston,³¹ set their novels in a wilderness image of arctic landscape, described by Allison Mitcham as a place of refuge, a “land where dreams can be pursued and sometimes fulfilled, provided that the individual has extraordinary strength of body and of spirit.”³² For the most part, Inuit were central to the plot, but in the image of the “noble savage” – living happily in harmony with the natural world until introduced to the corrupt values of the white man. These and other literary interpretations of the early 1970s suggest that the Arctic was now well assimilated into Canadian wilderness mythology.

Readers received mixed messages. On the one hand, the Arctic was imagined as a refuge from the ills of an industrial capitalist society, but its sanctity was threatened by oil and gas exploration and the potential for pollution. By deductive reasoning, some concerned Canadians believed that a halt to future development would save the arctic wilderness from extinction, and save the Inuit, who were portrayed as suffering from contact with corrupt values, from the evils of the modern world. As the environmental movement gained strength, it was assumed that northern Native peoples would join forces with activist groups to

fight a common enemy, perceived in broad terms to be industrial development, camouflaged as “progress.” The premise, however, was flawed.

In 1977, Thomas Berger’s report on the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry, *Northern Frontier – Northern Homeland*, recognized that indigenous peoples viewed their lands differently than other Canadians.³³ Environmentalists saw the report as a rallying call for a halt to all major development in the far North, not fully understanding that “northern homeland” did not equate with their concept of wilderness. At issue was not the question of protecting the environment, but how it was to be protected, by whom and for whom. Fred Bruemmer, who travelled widely in the Arctic and held traditional Inuit culture in high esteem, is only one example of the many who were blinded by their own visions of wilderness. After glorifying the Inuit for living in harmony with nature and decrying the ruthlessness of industrial exploitation, Bruemmer elaborated eloquently on why the arctic wilderness must be protected.

Balanced against this triumphant northward march of technological man, spurred by the south’s increasing need of the north’s mineral wealth, is a new and, for white men, totally different awareness of the north. It is born of the realization that the vast lands of the north are our last great wilderness and that in our increasingly artificial world, we need a place of wildness and loneliness; a place where wolves run free; a place where the water is pure and the air is clear; a place where nature is still master and where we can feel awe of her might.³⁴

Like so many others, Bruemmer was unaware that he was inadvertently appropriating Inuit homelands as a wilderness refuge for the white man.

One exception was Ned Franks, an avid outdoorsman and professor of political science at Queen’s University. He described Western images of wilderness landscape in terms of mythical space, as “an intellectual construct” and “a response of feeling and imagination.”

The landscape of the imagination is also a place of myth. There are two meanings of myth: first, it is the unknown, an area of mystery and rumours; second, it is the spatial component of a world view, a vision and expression of localized values within which people carry on their practical day-to-day activities.³⁵

Franks went on to argue that Canadian literature tended to incorporate Western imagination into the meaning of wilderness, without regard to the perceptions of indigenous peoples. Thus, “the landscape of wilderness in Canadian literature is mythic in the first sense, of adventurous and mystical, and not in the second sense, as the friendly and familiar homeland.”³⁶ More recently, David Klein, professor and senior scientist at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, described conventional interpretations of wilderness as a “Western concept alien to arctic

cultures.”³⁷ Yet academic recognition of that disparity has not been sufficient to bridge the perceptual gap in the broader Canadian community.

The Inuit had other solutions and their own agenda. To protect their environment from exploitation by others and at the same time preserve their culture, it was crucial to take back control of their lives. The process began in 1972; twenty years later, they stood at the brink of their overall objective. The Inuit of northern Quebec had a land claims settlement, which also gave them control over their education through the creation of the Kativik School Board and a guarantee of ongoing environmental assessment of the mega-hydroelectric project.³⁸ In the western Arctic, the Committee for Original Peoples' Entitlement (COPE) settlement provided the Inuvialuit with an equal voice on land use and resource management boards. Then, in 1992, a land claims agreement was signed in conjunction with the approval of a separate Nunavut Territory, in essence granting Inuit of the central mainland and arctic islands “self-government” within a non-ethnic government.³⁹ At present, the only major issues outstanding are the unsettled land claims of Labrador Inuit, the status of certain islands in Hudson Bay, the right of Quebec Inuit to remain within Canada should a majority in the province vote to separate, and the self-government accord between Nunavik Inuit and the province of Quebec.⁴⁰ Considering that less than a half century ago the Inuit were still denied the basic right of citizenship – the right to vote – their progress in regaining control of their lives, culture, lands and resources has been no less than phenomenal.

Paralleling these changes, the 1980s saw a shift in focus among Canada's literary elite. As the Arctic became more accessible, many were privileged to experience the once-imagined wilderness first-hand, with the result that their writing became more thoughtful and introspective. Remnants of the Arctic Sublime reflecting joy and fear, adventure and solitude, were still evident in some literary representations, but these were now more internalized, as in recent works by Aritha van Herk, John Moss and Margaret Atwood.⁴¹ For the most part, Inuit were still marginalized, but this was of lesser consequence than in previous decades. Today, the Inuit story is clearly articulated by their own people – in the music of Susan Aglukark, Tujjaat and William Toonga; in the woven tapestries of Pangnirtung; in exhibitions of traditional clothing and stone and ivory carvings; and in the writings of Alootook Ipellie and others.⁴² Although their voice is now clearly audible in the South, the true value lies in the confidence kindled in the younger generation. As suggested by Ipellie, it is only the beginning.

Let us write passages that will sway the centuries-old impressions that others have about our true colours. Let us put, without a moment's

hesitation, a voice in the mouth of our silent mind. Let us help breathe out the songs that want to be sung. Let us free ourselves from the chains that shackle our imagination and explore the unknown world that is within us. Let us help our silent mind speak through the beauty of the written word. Let us help to release it from Hell's world of pure silence. Let us dream forever and write.⁴³

Ipellie and others of his generation will stand as role models for the next century. Their inspiration today will create Inuit leaders of tomorrow.

As Inuit are regaining control over their lives, a dark cloud is looming on the horizon. Aside from concerns about the thinning ozone layer and global warming, scientists now inform us that industrial pollution from Eastern Europe and the southern United States has contaminated the arctic air, waters and food chain, thus posing a serious threat to Inuit, many of whom still rely heavily on country food.⁴⁴ One southerner saw arctic pollution from a different vantage point. In the spring of 1991, Margaret Atwood stood before an audience at Oxford University to explain the myths and the "imaginative mystique" of the northern wilderness, but her final words gave vent to concerns about global warming, environmental degradation and pollution.

The edifice of Northern imagery we've been discussing in these lectures was erected on a reality; if that reality ceases to exist, the imagery, too, will cease to have any resonance or meaning, except as a sort of indecipherable hieroglyphic. The North will be neither female nor male, neither fearful nor health-giving, because it will be dead. The earth, like trees, dies from the top down. The things that are killing the North will kill, if left unchecked, everything else.⁴⁵

Perhaps it was unintentional, a leftover from perceptions of another age, but Atwood made no mention of those most affected by arctic pollution – the Inuit. Still motivated by visions that created the Myth of the North, most Canadians view the Arctic in terms of southern impact, such as the effect of weather patterns, the potential of untapped resource wealth, or simply national pride in a unique, majestic landscape. Inuit, however, are enveloped within the Arctic and will experience the impact of any environmental change first, and for the most part, negatively.

Meanwhile, southern Canadians cling tenaciously to their vision of the Arctic as a pristine wilderness, their dreams kept alive by travel brochures and coffee-table books that revisit the Sublime through the skilful use of colour photography. These images continue to inspire wilderness canoeists and hikers to travel north "to find themselves," following a quest pattern born of Greek mythology and later adopted by nineteenth-century explorers.⁴⁶ For the less

hardy, cruise ships now offer eco-tours to behold the majesty of arctic wilderness. Yet many questions remain unresolved. By whose definition is the Arctic a wilderness? Who should be responsible for its protection against pollution? And ultimately, under what terms? And at what cost?

Centuries of survival in the harsh arctic environment created a unique Inuit culture, distinct from other North American Aborigines. Unlike Western cultures that relied on the written word, Inuit history has been passed down through countless generations by storytelling. As I have argued elsewhere, Inuit oral history was influenced by spirituality; the written narratives of the Western world, by imagination.⁴⁷ One culture sought explanations of the unknown beyond their world, the other from within themselves. Inevitably, one acquired a holistic view of their environment, the other an anthropocentric vision. As a result, there are two incompatible images of the Arctic.

For Inuit people, their homelands had no borders or boundaries, nor were they limited to physical space. Their traditional concept of land, or *nuna*, did not admit ownership or possession. Even today, there are no fences separating Inuit homes from their neighbours. Land is considered communal, and Inuit collectively accept responsibility for its protection. Although Inuit hunting territory may comprise a relatively small portion of the Arctic, the distant lands and the seas beyond are of equal importance, as they provide sustenance for the wildlife upon which they were once dependant for survival. As such, the Arctic in its entirety is considered to be as much a part of their environment as their communities and surrounding hunting grounds. Rooted in the distant past, this belief is still held today, as depicted in a poster designed by the Inuit Youth Council. At the centre, an Inuk hunter stands tall atop an *inuksuk*,⁴⁸ his harpoon held to the skies, surrounded by polar bears, seals and walruses, with water, ice floes and snow-clad mountains in the background. The title is explicit – *Land, Inuit and Wildlife are One* – and the symbolism is electrifying.⁴⁹

For Inuit, the arctic environment holds a spiritual significance not readily understood by Western cultures. Seventy years ago, an Inuk explained this concept to Danish explorer Knud Rasmussen, by describing how “the earth and everything belonging to it ... are sacred.”⁵⁰ As Klein has argued, the spiritual significance attached to even remote and uninhabited lands is in direct conflict with Western concepts of wilderness.

[Sacred sites] might include those areas of the Arctic that could not support indigenous people, areas without harvestable resources and therefore of no utilitarian value, such as the tops of high mountains, ice caps, and expanses of the sea beyond safe exploitation. Such areas, although not visited except perhaps by shamen seeking powers from

the spirit world, were, nevertheless, usually endowed with spiritual entities or power. They commanded respect even though seldom or never visited.⁵¹

The sanctity of their environment has acquired new meaning for Inuit, as visitors arrive in increasing numbers – curiosity seekers who do not know or understand the nature of Inuit spirituality and thus carelessly traverse hallowed ground or pocket artifacts as souvenirs.

Throughout the Arctic, *inuksuit* dot the landscape, a form of silent communication among Inuit people and, in some cases, with their ancestors or the spiritual world. In the singular, the word *inuksuk* means a configuration of stones “acting in the capacity of an inuk – a human being.” Norman Hallendy, who has spent a lifetime studying the meanings and spiritual significance of *inuksuit*, describes their multiple purposes.

An inuksuk is a proxy in every sense of the word; it can provide comfort to the travel weary, life-saving advice to the disoriented, a focus of veneration to the spiritual seeker. It is a timeless language of the land for people who exist on the land.... For the Inuit elders, some *inuksuk*-like figures were revered as materialized forms of power, not as symbols but as actual loci of power. They were never approached.⁵²

Inuksuit stand over the land, as sentinels protecting the heritage of the Inuit people, as icons venerating their culture and as markers alerting strangers that this is not “uninhabited” wilderness.

For many hundreds of years, spiritual beliefs dictated that the Inuit must live in harmony with the natural world if they were to survive, a creed that contrasts sharply with Judaeo-Christian beliefs in the right of humankind to hold dominion over nature. Even today, Inuit traditional knowledge inspires confidence in their own superiority when confronted with outsiders armed with textbooks and theorems. Their customary tenets also declared that co-operation and sharing were essential for survival and, in the same context, that all things living and inanimate must be protected from undue exploitation. Negotiation of land claims and the right to self-government were means of regaining control over their environment, but now Inuit must seek co-operation from other cultures with different traditions if they are to stem the external pollution that threatens their environment and perhaps their very existence.⁵³

Most environmental activists thought their efforts to halt further development in the Arctic would be welcomed, failing to understand that a pristine wilderness could not provide a viable economy sufficient to sustain the Inuit people. Nor could national parks and game preserves solve the problems of air and water pollution. Inuit are committed to protecting the integrity of their environment against degradation, but at the same time are searching for new

economic opportunities that do not deny or compete with cultural traditions. The freedom to hunt and fish is central to their cultural identity and tied to an age-old belief in the co-dependence of “the hunter and the hunted,” described by Hugh Brody as a “contract between partners, in which it is not always clear who is the prey.”⁵⁴ This principle also places the Inuit in opposition to “animal rights” activists.

To address these and other issues, Inuit leaders from Alaska, Canada and Greenland met in 1977, to create the Inuit Circumpolar Conference “as a means of insuring protection of Inuit culture and the Arctic’s resources.”⁵⁵ Canadian Inuit look to the future with new optimism and determination, as articulated in a mission statement set down by the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada – “Looking to the Future, Remembering the Past.”

Over the past two decades the geographic isolation of Inuit groups from one another has given way to a new spirit of cooperation that binds individuals into members of a community, communities into a region, and regions into a national and international presence. With the settlement of outstanding land claims and the establishment of self-government within the new framework of Inuit regions, the Inuit of Canada will enter the next century politically stronger, economically invigorated and socially united.

As always, the land will remain a vital element of our physical and social survival. Hunting will remain an essential part of our identity, yet adherence to tradition will not prevent an acceptance of change. In every way, the Inuit of the 21st century will continue as a strong culture, our system of values will sustain day-to-day life, and we expect our language will flourish. And, as it has been from the very origins of Inuit culture, tradition will be integrated with change in a way that gives a very special quality of life to the dynamic people and culture known as the Inuit of Canada.⁵⁶

Moving ahead with their own agenda, the Inuit have clearly defined the meaning of the arctic environment in their own identity. Notably absent are any references to the Arctic as a wilderness.

As Canadians approach the next millennium, this may be the opportune moment to reconsider the relevance of our Myth of the North and its wilderness ethos. For southerners, the Arctic represents “otherness” in the form of an unfamiliar landscape – aesthetically beautiful and awe-inspiring – but this vision does not give one the right to appropriate Inuit homeland and preserve it as a place to seek refuge and solace. Inuit history and spirituality cannot be erased from the arctic landscape, nor can the indigenous presence be ignored. Old perceptions must make way for the new.

Kenneth Coates, a historian of the North, has urged development of a new “conceptual framework for study of northern remote regions.” Debunking the romantic images held by southerners, he sees the reality of the North being played out in a series of struggles: cultural, economic, social, political and physical survival in an unforgiving environment.

The North, land of legend, mystery and misconception, remains very much a conceptual wasteland. After decades of scholarship, much of it excellent, insightful and methodologically important, the vast circumpolar region is still typically explained within the conceptual frameworks and intellectual paradigms of the Southern, or “outside.”⁵⁷

The argument is persuasive, but change will be difficult if new constructs require alteration to Canadian identity myths. With respect to wilderness imagery, some may seek compromise definitions to allow Inuit homelands to co-exist with non-Native perceptions. At present, however, the expectations inherent in the two images are simply not compatible. The onus lies on southerners, as outsiders, to change the focus of their vision. Only by placing the Inuit people at the centre of the arctic landscape can all Canadians truly venerate their northern identity.

The image of the Arctic as wilderness will likely persevere in the minds of some southern Canadians. Others, like myself, may still find peace and refuge on the arctic tundra. The absence of forest will continue to open up a landscape that seems endless, a vision that diminishes the importance of oneself and lightens one’s burdens, real or imaginary. Even as an outsider, I may sometimes feel the power of its spirituality and stand in awe, but I am not part of that landscape, nor a central part of its heritage. The Arctic cannot be a sustainable homeland and, at the same time, a wilderness preserve. But it can and should be celebrated as *Nunatsiaq* – the beautiful land – befitting a truly pan-Canadian Myth of the North.

Notes

¹ At the 13th Annual Canoeing and Wilderness Symposium held in Toronto on 31 January 1998, Alex Hall, a respected naturalist, canoeist and environmentalist, proposed that a vast area of land stretching from the existing Thelon Game Reserve north to Queen Maud Gulf be set aside as a wilderness reserve to prevent construction of roads and mineral development. To preserve the wildlife, he also argued for a ban on Inuit hunting and fishing.

² There are subtle differences in dialect among the Inuit peoples. For those on the central mainland and arctic islands, *nuna* in Inuktitut means land, with the suffix “vut” added to mean “our land.” Thus, *Nunavut* is the official name of the new

territory in the eastern Arctic, to be established on 1 April 1999. In northern Quebec, Inuit lands are now called *Nunavik*, also meaning “our land.” In the western Arctic, the Inuvialuit who negotiated the COPE land claim agreement in 1984 simply call their lands the *Inuvialuit* region.

³ See map 11.1, in Robert McGhee, *Ancient People of the Arctic* (Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1996) 228; also 23, 194, 230-1. See also “Inuit Historical Perspectives,” *The Inuit of Canada* (Ottawa: Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, 1995) 2-3. McGhee, curator of archaeology at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, refers to the Inuit as the direct descendants of the Thule culture, arriving in the central and eastern Arctic from Siberia, by way of Alaska around 1,000 AD. Earlier migrations of Palaeo-Eskimos arrived in Alaska about 5,000 years ago, but disappeared shortly after the arrival of the Thule Inuit (104-5).

⁴ Shelagh D. Grant, “Myths of the North in the Canadian Ethos,” *The Northern Review* 3.4 (1989): 15.

⁵ My understanding of Inuit perceptions is derived from a variety of sources: conversations during field trips to Iqaluit, Pond Inlet and Pangnirtung, 1994-1997; informal discussions with Inuit leaders; their comments in *Nunatsiaq News*; and three published sources: Mary May Simon, *Inuit: One Future – One Arctic* (Peterborough: The Cider Press, 1996); Inuit Circumpolar Conference, *Principles and Elements for a Comprehensive Arctic Policy* (Montreal: McGill University, 1992); and *The Inuit of Canada*.

⁶ Northrop Frye, *The Modern Century: The Whidden Lectures 1967* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1991), as cited by Richard Cavell in “White Technologies,” *Essays on Canadian Writing: Representing North*, ed. Sherrill Grace (Oakville: ECW Press, 1997) 199.

⁷ Jonathan Bordo, “Jack Pine – Wilderness Sublime or the Erasure of the Aboriginal Presence from the Landscape,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 27.4 (Winter 1992-1993): 98-128.

⁸ Cavell’s abstract in Grace, op cit. vi.

⁹ Amanda Graham, “Reflections on Contemporary Northern Canadian History,” in Grace 194.

¹⁰ James Raffan, *Summer North of Sixty* (Toronto: Key Porter, 1990) vii.

¹¹ As cited in Graham 194.

¹² Civilization here refers to “Western civilization.” In the period under discussion, Amerindians were not considered civilized by European standards.

¹³ Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 3rd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982) 2.

¹⁴ As quoted by Chauncey C. Loomis in “The Arctic Sublime,” *Nature and the Victorian Imagination*, eds. U.C. Knoepfelmacher and G.B. Tennyson (Berkeley: University of California, 1977) 95-112, citing Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite* (Ithaca: New York, 1959) 32.

¹⁵ Grant 27.

¹⁶ Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949) 188, 17.

¹⁷ Nash 3.

¹⁸ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perceptions, Attitudes and Values* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1974) 111.

¹⁹ J. Douglas Porteous, *Landscapes of the Mind: Words of Sense and Metaphor* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990) 4.

²⁰ G. Erlich, as quoted in Porteous 4.

²¹ Nash 2.

²² Loomis 99. This paper offers an impressive analysis of the origins and the impact of the Arctic Sublime as expressed in literature and art. 23. Cavell 202.

²³ Cavell 202.

²⁴ Shelagh D. Grant, "Imagination and Spirituality: Written Narratives and the Oral Tradition," *Echoing Silence: Essays on Arctic Narrative*, ed. John Moss (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1997) 194, 198.

²⁵ I.S. MacLaren, "The Aesthetic Map of the North, 1845-1859," *Arctic* 38.2 (June 1985): 89-103.

²⁶ Beau Riffenburgh, "Jules Verne and the Conquest of the Polar Regions," *Polar Record* 27.162 (July 1991): 237-40. Riffenburgh describes this story in conjunction with Verne's other images appearing in eleven novels devoted to polar adventures, all of which contain vivid examples of the Arctic Sublime. This particular incident appears in Verne, *The Desert of Ice; or, the Further Adventures of Captain Hatteras* (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1874) 194.

²⁷ Grant, "Imagination," 194-5.

²⁸ Eli Mandel, "The Inward, Northward Journey of Lawren Harris," *artscanada* (October/November 1978): 24.

²⁹ As quoted in Paul Hjartarson, "Of Inward Journeys and Interior Landscapes: Glenn Gould, Lawren Harris, and 'The Idea of North,'" in Grace 70.

³⁰ As examples: Leslie Neatby, *Conquest of the Last Frontier* (Toronto: Longmans Canada, 1966), also his *Frozen Ships: The Arctic Diary of Johann Miertsching, 1850-1854* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1967) and *The Search for Franklin* (London: Arthur Barker, 1970). At roughly the same time, Farley Mowat edited a trilogy, based on excerpts from explorers' narratives and published by McClelland & Stewart: *Ordeal by Ice: The Search for the Northwest Passage* (1960), *Polar Passion: The Quest for the North Pole* (1967) and *Tundra: Selections from the Great Accounts of Arctic Land Voyages* (1973). Two decades later, Pierre Berton would follow with *The Arctic Grail: The Quest for the North West Passage and the North Pole, 1818-1909* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1988).

³¹ As examples: Harold Horwood, *White Eskimo: A Novel of Labrador* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1972); Yves Thériault, *Agaguk* (Montréal: Les éditions de

l'homme, 1961); and James Houston, *The White Dawn: An Eskimo Saga* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971).

³² Allison Mitcham, *The Northern Imagination: A Study of Northern Canadian Literature* (Moonbeam, Ontario: Penumbra Press, 1983) 19.

³³ Justice Thomas R. Berger, *Northern Frontier, Northern Homeland: The Report of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1977).

³⁴ Fred Bruemmer, *The Arctic* (New York: Quadrangle, 1973) 76.

³⁵ C.E.S. Franks, "Canoeing: Towards a Landscape of the Imagination," *Canexus: The Canoe in Canadian Culture*, eds. James Raffan and Bert Horwood (Toronto: Betelgeuse, 1988) 189-90.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 199.

³⁷ David Klein, "Wilderness: A Western Concept Alien to Arctic Cultures," *Information North* 20.3 (September 1994): 4.

³⁸ Simon 65-6. Although the Inuit had official control in 1978 under the terms of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, the Quebec government has held back sufficient funding to develop a new curriculum. The infrastructure, however, is in place.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 84-5.

⁴⁰ As of June 1998, self-government negotiations between Makivik Corporation, representing Nunavik Inuit, and the province of Quebec are at an impasse because of Makivik's refusal to sever ties with the federal government. Jane George, "Inuit self-government talks stalled over wording of accord," *Nunatsiaq News* 26.20 (12 June 1998): 1.

⁴¹ Aritha van Herk, *Places Far from Ellesmere* (Red Deer, Alberta: Red Deer College Press, 1990); John Moss, *Enduring Dreams: An Exploration of Arctic Landscape* (Concord, Ontario: Anansi, 1994); Margaret Atwood, *Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

⁴² As an example: Alooook Ipellie, *Arctic Dreams and Nightmares* (Penticton, British Columbia: Theytus Books, 1993).

⁴³ Alooook Ipellie, passage from an editorial entitled "If the Mind Could Speak," as quoted in "Thirsty for Life: A Nomad Learns to Write and Draw," in Moss, *Echoing Silence*, 101.

⁴⁴ Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme, *Arctic Pollution Issues: A State of the Arctic Environment Report* (Oslo, Norway: AMAP, 1997).

⁴⁵ Atwood 116.

⁴⁶ William C. James, "The Quest Pattern and the Canoe Trip," *Nastawgan: The Canadian North by Canoe & Snowshow*, eds. Bruce W. Hodgins and Margaret Hobbs (Agincourt, Ontario: Betelgeuse, 1985) 9-10.

⁴⁷ Grant, "Imagination," 116.

⁴⁸ An *inuksuk* is a rock cairn, generally shaped in human form.

⁴⁹ A poster entitled "Inuit, Land and Wildlife are One" was produced in 1995 by the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada.

⁵⁰ As quoted in Bruemmer 219.

⁵¹ Klein 4.

⁵² Norman Hallendy, "The Silent Messengers," *Equinox* (January/February 1996): 38-9, 53. Simon 54-5.

⁵³ Simon 54-5.

⁵⁴ Hugh Brody, *Living Arctic: Hunters of the Canadian North* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1987) 73.

⁵⁵ Simon 13-4. The organization meets every three years and now represents 125,000 Inuit, including those from the Chukotka region of Siberia.

⁵⁶ *The Inuit of Canada* 18.

⁵⁷ Kenneth Coates, "The Rediscovery of the North: Towards a Conceptual Framework for the Study of Northern/Remote Regions," *The Northern Review* 12.13 (Summer 1994): 15.

6

Arctic Historiography: Current Status and Blueprints for the Future

First published in *Journal of Canadian Studies* 33, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 145-153.¹

Volumes upon volumes have been written on arctic history, but relatively few are by Canadian academic historians. Who has been writing arctic history and why? Do current trends in arctic historiography suggest the need for change, and if so, what form should it take? And how might these objectives be accomplished?

Before addressing these questions, what do I mean by “arctic historiography”? Since history is essentially a story about people – about societies, cultures and civilizations – “Arctic” is defined here as the traditional homelands of the Inuit people.¹ In Canada, these lie in the northern region of the Mackenzie District, the proposed Nunavut territory, northern Quebec (or Nunavik) and northern Labrador. “Historiography” is the writing of history, the interpretation of historical facts and events as they relate to the interests of contemporary society.² Scholars of the Western world traditionally divided Inuit history into pre-history and post-contact history, a Euro-centric perception that seemed to imply there was no history before the arrival of the white man. In both cases, interpretation was deemed the responsibility of anthropologists. Times have changed, as have perceptions, but Canadian academic historians have yet to write a comprehensive history of the Inuit peoples of Canada.

For centuries, Western scholars envisioned arctic history to be synonymous with polar exploration history and, as such, the exclusive domain of European and Russian scholars, until they were joined by American historians in the mid-to late 19th century. Because it celebrated heroes, conquest and pride in achievement, the history of arctic exploration was readily integrated into nationalist and imperialist histories of the newly industrialized nation states.

¹ This paper is an expanded version of the comments made by Shelagh D. Grant upon receiving the 1996 Northern Science award in Ottawa, 22 May 1997. Publications appearing in 1997 or after are not included in this discussion.

Preoccupied in the 19th century with the politics of nation-building, railway construction and pioneer settlement, Canadian historians seemed content to attach British polar exploration history to their own, as part of their colonial legacy. Until the region offered up comparable Canadian heroes, political significance or sizable resource wealth, the Arctic was not considered of major importance.³ By contrast, the Yukon drew scholarly attention because of the economic and political implications of the Klondike Gold Rush. Here was a truly “northern” history of adventure, discovery of riches and survival of the fittest, a history that inspired national pride in having thwarted United States imperialism.

Coexisting with polar exploration narratives was Inuit history, preserved through countless generations by the oral tradition. These two forms of historiography were rooted in disparate perceptions: one focused on Western scientific achievements and conquest; the other recounted Inuit spirituality and adaptations to their environment.⁴ The former described the curious inhabitants of a formidable and alien land; the latter told of the arrival of big ships, carrying strangers who needed help to survive the long winters. Anthropologists have long understood the significance of Inuit oral history. Canadian academic historians have been slow to accept its value as a credible resource.

The apathy towards Inuit studies among Canada’s professional historians has been partially offset by a surfeit of arctic literature written by geographers, surveyors, anthropologists, archaeologists, ethnologists, ethnographers, geologists, botanists, ornithologists, zoologists, journalists and novelists – Canadians and non-Canadians. Many were writing “history.” Some were excellent, but nonetheless moulded by the perspectives and methodologies of the author’s discipline. The Canadian government also contributed to arctic historiography during these years by publishing detailed accounts of its sovereignty patrols and scientific expeditions.⁵ Beginning in the 1930s, these were complemented by a number of “official” arctic histories compiled for the government.⁶ Written for public consumption, most were understandably less critical than were reports of privately-funded or non-British explorations.

Popular arctic histories have also filled a potential void, many of them exceptional in their own right. Yet most rely on secondary sources, with the result that they also inherit their inaccuracies. Popular histories appeal to a broad readership, thus playing an important part in fostering pride in our arctic heritage. This does not, however, absolve the responsibility of the academic historian to provide them accurate resources based on primary research.

Canadian readers seemed particularly entranced by arctic autobiographies written by adventure-seekers, former members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, ships’ captains, fur traders, missionaries and later, by doctors, nurses,

schoolteachers and transient visitors. Most were anecdotal, with a propensity for exaggeration and sensationalism. As a result, they tended to be unreliable as sources of accurate information. They did, however, reinforce a romanticized image of the Arctic as a place of adventure and mystique beyond the reach of most Canadians.

The Second World War brought defence activities to the North, and with them, a heightened awareness of deficiencies in health and education services available to northern Indians and Inuit. A number of books on the North appeared as a result of public interest and concern. Some were anthologies, such as *The New North-West* edited by C.A. Dawson (Toronto 1947), in which contributions by Canadian historians were notably absent.

The first arctic history book written by a Canadian scholar appears to be *In Quest of the North West Passage* (Toronto 1958), by Leslie Neatby, written after his retirement as a professor of Classics. This volume was followed by Glyndwr Williams's *The British Search for the Northwest Passage in the Eighteenth Century* (London 1962), then by T.J. Oleson's *Early Voyages and Northern Approaches, 1000-1632* (Toronto 1963). As Canada approached its 100th anniversary, it is significant that these historians still focused on the distant past, when the Arctic was perceived as a place of adventure, conquest and achievement, and as such, a source of national pride.

His colleagues' apparent lack of interest in the North prompted the eminent Canadian historian W.L. Morton to write in 1970 that "the North is yet to be integrated into the historiography of Canada."⁷ Scholarly histories, however, are not easily written on demand. Thus, with the exception of a few scholarly articles and Morris Zaslow's *The Opening of the Canadian North, 1870-1914*,⁸ the initial response to Professor Morton's challenge was relatively limited.

In 1980, Professor T.H.B. Symons issued a similar warning about the status of northern research in the social sciences and humanities. Based on statistical analysis of the previous decade's grants awarded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (and its predecessor), Symons reported that less than two per cent of the awards were for northern research. Of that amount, two-thirds were allocated to anthropology, archaeology and linguistic studies. Only five grants over 10 years had gone to northern history projects. The problem, according to Symons, was a lack of applications, reflecting "the failure of the Canadian scholarly community to tackle the manifold questions relating to the North."⁹ This was particularly true of the Canadian historical profession, where out of more than 1,000 full-time history professors, only 11 indicated interest in the North.¹⁰

In the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, the situation improved immeasurably, as evident by a number of northern books written by academic

historians such as Richard Diubaldo, Alan Cooke and Clive Holland, Hugh Wallace, Kenneth Coates, William Morrison, Robert Page, myself and others. These were traditional histories, focusing either on exploration, public policy or economic or political development. Two very important histories were published under contract by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs: William Morrison's [*Under the Flag: Canadian Sovereignty and the Native People in Northern Canada*] (1984) and Richard Diubaldo's *The Government of Canada and the Inuit, 1900-1967* (1985). Their distribution, regrettably, was limited.

The same decade also witnessed a proliferation of northern fur trade and social contact histories – Indian, not Inuit. By now, the “North” was defined either politically as the Yukon and Northwest Territories, or as the homeland of northern Native peoples. With the new social contact histories centring on Canadian Indians, the North was moving south to encompass the northern reaches of most provinces. Although the Inuit fell under the rubric of northern Native history, they were generally ignored by academic historians as focal points for their primary research.¹¹

To date, the distinctions between Indian and Inuit cultures have yet to be clearly defined, even though major differences exist historically in terms of culture, socioeconomic background, contact relationships and government policies during the pre- and post-Confederation eras. As a consequence, Inuit studies were generally marginalized in the new Native Studies programmes being offered at universities across Canada.

Nonetheless, many excellent articles on Inuit history appeared in the 1980s, written by anthropologists, sociologists and human geographers, many of them associated with GÉTIC (the Inuit and Circumpolar Study Group at Université Laval's Faculty of Social Sciences). In 1978, GÉTIC's anthropologists also played a major role in establishing a new scholarly journal, *Études/Inuit/Studies*, and the biennial Inuit Studies Conference. The volume and quality of work published by affiliates of GÉTIC are phenomenal.¹² Although the majority of their studies have centred on the Indians and Inuit of northern Quebec, some have encompassed other regions of the Eastern Arctic. Anthropologists at McMaster University and the University of Alberta have also produced noteworthy studies. Yet the calibre of their research and publications only accentuated the lack of similar interest among academic historians.

During this same period, several historians wrote on public policy as it applied to Inuit affairs,¹³ and some touched on intellectual interpretations of arctic history,¹⁴ but they were few in number compared to those writing on northern Native issues involving the Dene, Cree and Métis.¹⁵ Meanwhile, media coverage of Native land claims and arctic environmental issues sparked new public interest, which in turn created a ready market for popular histories,

environmental studies, political analyses and other forms of arctic literature. The climate of opportunity inspired optimism, prompting historian Richard Diubaldo to suggest that more scholarly interest would naturally follow the increase of popular literature on the Arctic. He warned, however, that “southern-style” historians would have to adjust their vision, as “the north is the north and can not, or can no longer, be understood exclusively from a southern point of view.”¹⁶

Others had recognized the importance of a northern perspective. When rapid changes in socioeconomic conditions threatened the continuity of Inuit oral history, Stuart Hodgson, then Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, urged the taping of elders’ stories. The initial results were gratifying. In 1974, the residents of Pangnirtung presented the commissioner with 11 stories that were later compiled into a book.¹⁷ Similar stories from Arctic Bay were also published at this time.¹⁸ In 1975, Montreal writer Dorothy Harley Eber, working with Peter Pitseolak from Cape Dorset, brought together interviews, a syllabic manuscript and his personal collection of photographs to produce a book on his life history.¹⁹

The history that provided inspiration for my current research, however, was a small, but important, volume by a Roman Catholic priest, Father Guy Mary-Rousselière. Father Mary, as he was known in Pond Inlet, used Inuit stories, photographs, archival material and other primary sources to trace the 19th-century migration of Baffin Inuit to Greenland.²⁰ This book, along with Eber’s *When the Whalers Were Up North: Inuit Memories from the Eastern Arctic*,²¹ is hopefully a harbinger of future arctic historiography.

In 1986, Bruce Hodgins and I were overly optimistic in predicting the next decade would witness a major increase in academic historiography of the Canadian Arctic.²² Instead, the pattern of the 1980s continued into the next decade. Measured by the number of scholarly articles and book-length studies published in the 1990s, Canada’s professional historians still focused their social contact histories on northern Indians, not Inuit. In part, this may be a consequence of doctoral graduates finding positions in the new Native Studies programmes that tended to emphasize Indian, rather than Inuit, studies.

The scholarly arctic history books published in the 1990s were not, with a few exceptions,²³ written by Canadian academic historians. Scholars from other disciplines filled the void: human geographers, anthropologists, archaeologists, sociologists and a political scientist.²⁴ The Museum of Civilization and Robert McGhee deserve special mention for producing some excellent publications, as do the GÉTIC scholars for their exemplary contributions. The native and northern history series published by McGill-Queen’s University Press has published important new works relating to Inuit or arctic studies – again, none

were written by academic historians.²⁵ Yet, at a recent conference, "Law of the Buffalo – Law of the Musk Ox," co-sponsored by the University of Calgary's Department of History and the Osgoode Legal History Society, only four out of the 26 presenters dealing with Inuit topics were historians.²⁶

Since 1990, non-academics have continued to write arctic history books, and some are excellent. These include journalists, a ship's officer, a retired public servant trained as a clinical psychologist, a sociologist and numerous "freelance" writers.²⁷ Non-Canadian scholars, as well, have published important arctic histories, noting in particular those studying at the Scott Polar Research Institute (SPRI) at Cambridge University.²⁸

Recent quantitative studies suggest that Canada's academic historians are less interested in the Arctic than their peers in the United States and Scandinavia.²⁹ This apathy is also demonstrated in a study conducted by the Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies. Of 2,659 Northern Training Grant awards from 1987 to 1995, only 33 were given to history students. Moreover, in the last four years (1992-1995), only seven awards were for historical research, compared to 25 in the four years previous.³⁰

There are other signs that interest in the "North" generally is in decline among members of the historical profession. A once thriving "northern history group" established in the early 1980s no longer meets at the Conference of Learned Societies, and their bi-annual newsletter was replaced several years ago by a column in the Native History Study Group newsletter.³¹ Either interest in northern history peaked in the mid-1980s, or else it has been diverted to northern Indian or Native studies in general.

Meanwhile, written interpretations of Inuit oral history have not progressed as expected. Although taping of elders' stories is ongoing, major effort will be required to preserve, catalogue and duplicate the tapes as protection against accidental loss or damage. Written translations also are needed, if southern-based historians are to incorporate an Inuit perspective without costly field research. On a more positive note, a group of Inuit educators met last summer at Pond Inlet to prepare a history text for their elementary students, based on the taped interviews of Inuit elders.³² Other applications of Inuit oral history are still on the horizon.³³

In light of the arctic interest shown by other Canadian scholars, why then have academic historians remained on the sidelines? There are a number of possible explanations. Without written interpretations of Inuit oral history, a southern scholar must look to new interdisciplinary approaches and methodologies, involving lengthy field trips, team studies and perhaps the learning of a new language, Inuktitut. Anthropologists and geographers are already accustomed to both field work and team studies. In most cases,

knowledge of arctic history is a prerequisite for their primary research, and thus it is natural that they should begin writing histories to fill a void left by their colleagues in history. For historians trained to study conventional archival and other primary sources, the field trip approach requires a major break from tradition. Working against acceptance of new approaches by historians are the increased teaching loads and reduced research funds resulting from recent cutbacks. The latter becomes a primary consideration when faced with the high cost of arctic air travel, accommodation and translation. This alone would be a major deterrent for doctoral students contemplating theses in arctic history. Another limiting factor is the maturity of arctic historians and their move to administrative positions.³⁴ Others have retired or are about to be retired, with cutbacks at most universities limiting hopes of replacements.

Still, the historical profession at large has not yet addressed the reasons for its relative disinterest in Inuit or arctic history. Nor has it considered how best to incorporate an Inuit perspective in academic histories and what role, if any, it should play in encouraging Inuit to write their own history. The potential abdication of this responsibility to other disciplines should prompt serious soul-searching.

Canadian arctic historiography is clearly at a crossroads, with various alternatives open for consideration as we approach the next millennium. A “do nothing” approach will likely leave interpretation of our arctic heritage to popular historians, anthropologists, geographers, non-Canadian scholars and consultants. At first glance, there seems to be a valid argument that Inuit history is best left to those anthropologists who have proven their expertise. Yet leaving the academic historians “out of the loop” sacrifices their ability to place Inuit history within its proper context in the writing of Canadian history. Another consideration is the effect on undergraduate course offerings, and its consequences for how arctic history is taught in public and secondary schools, and subsequently understood by succeeding generations.

While some form of additional financial support may be necessary for research, historians cannot rely entirely on the largesse of government to resolve their problems. In the past, Ottawa has provided generous support to promote Canadian literature, art, music, film and theatre as a means of protecting our cultural heritage. Similar initiatives have been directed towards preserving Inuit heritage and cultural traditions, including funding for the art and crafts industry, for communications, special events, oral history projects, local museums and interpretative centres. Some government departments and agencies have sponsored their own arctic studies, projects and publications.³⁵ The Museum of Civilization, in particular, has made an outstanding contribution to public knowledge of Inuit heritage through archaeological studies, the collection of

artifacts, publications and special events. Much larger sums have supported arctic research in the physical and biological sciences, economic and political development and land claims settlements. For a variety of reasons, including its own lack of initiative, the historical profession has not been a major beneficiary. To gain entry now will mean competing with other disciplines for access to decreasing research funds.

Co-operation and co-ordination with other scholars seems to be the best option available to academic historians. Even then, there are no simple answers. The problems associated with arctic research are defined by our geography: a large country, with a relatively small, scattered population and with modest financial resources. A typically Canadian problem may require a traditionally "Canadian" solution, blending centralized efficiencies with decentralized realities. With vision, co-operation and ingenuity, a multi-disciplinary effort could be far more effective and provide long-term cumulative benefits for all concerned. "Blueprints for the future" must be affordable, but they need not be mere band-aid solutions.

As a first step, why not consolidate our scattered resources and create an adjunct and co-ordinating body for existing arctic research institutes across Canada, at a central location, with access to major archival sources and with direct air connections to both the Eastern and Western Arctic?

Why not resurrect an idea that has emerged many times in the past and establish a Canadian Arctic or Polar Research Centre, along the lines of the Scott Polar Research Institute at Cambridge,³⁶ a centre providing post-graduate courses and research facilities?

Why not begin with a focus on graduate courses in Inuit studies, by creating exchange teaching and learning linkages with the Inuit Studies courses at Nunavut Arctic College?

Why not be creative and co-ordinate such a centre with a number of existing degree-granting institutions (rather than one university) to develop partnership programs in post-graduate, doctoral and post-doctoral Inuit studies, both in Canada and abroad? In this way, post-graduate courses could be taught at the centre, and accepted towards post-graduate degrees at participating universities.

Why not co-ordinate the centre's activities to provide financial support and at the same time enhance the role of existing research institutions, such as the Arctic Institute of North America (AINA) at the University of Calgary, GÉTIC at the Université Laval, the Canadian Circumpolar Institute at the University of Alberta, the proposed Rupert's Land Institute at the University of Manitoba, the Nunavut Research Institute in Iqaluit and so on?

Why not work with these and other institutions to further develop and enhance their existing databases of arctic and Inuit research, literature and

expertise, and at the same time provide a more efficient means to disseminate that knowledge to public and private agencies?³⁷

Why not develop a core of academic expertise which could be affiliated with such a centre, in co-operation with the Scott Polar Research Institute, the Arctic Centre at the University of Lapland in Finland, the Dansk Polarcenter in Denmark, the Institute of Arctic Studies at Dartmouth College, New Hampshire, and the International Arctic Social Sciences Association, to develop more comparative circumpolar studies?

Why not be opportunistic and utilize the abandoned buildings of the decommissioned Rockcliffe military base in Ottawa for offices, classrooms, lecture halls, meeting rooms, cafeterias, lab facilities, libraries, archival storage and student and visitor accommodations?

Why not create an outreach programme connected to Nunavut Arctic College, and to Aurora College in the Western Arctic, to assist Inuit in developing their own expertise in all aspects of arctic science, social science and the humanities?

As a specific example, why not develop a graduate studies programme with a field work component designed to assist Inuit students in learning both how to preserve, store and catalogue their taped oral histories, and how best to transcribe their oral history for dissemination throughout the Arctic and the world at large? Senior graduate students might teach semester courses at the two Arctic colleges in environmental science, biology, zoology, archaeology and anthropology. Exchange programmes might evolve in which Inuit would instruct southern students about their traditional knowledge. Such programmes would have a trickle-down effect benefitting both northern and southern students at all levels of education.

Why not be innovative and flexible in developing Inuit post-secondary education programmes? For example, might we consider utilizing a one-on-one apprenticeship model, instead of the traditional university requirements of essays and exams?

As a first step, a working group might be set up, consisting of no more than five senior arctic scholars to represent a cross-section of disciplines and research institutions. The objective would be to study the concept of a polar research centre, to set down the objectives and time frame, and to bring forward recommendations on structure, name, programmes, physical requirements, human resources and funding. The initial priority would be to create and promote a post-graduate Inuit studies programme. Receiving those recommendations would be Canadian universities, Inuit representatives, territorial and federal government officials, charitable foundations and the private sector. Although the working group might be funded by government on

an “expenses only” basis, its success would be determined by the degree of initiative and co-operation shown by the academic community in the initial planning process.

If such a concept were feasible, then the federal government might be asked to consider a matching grants programme for the creation of a Canadian Polar Research Centre, as a millennium project, to facilitate north-south and east-west interaction in advancing knowledge and interest in our Arctic regions, beginning with a focus on Inuit Studies. Canadian Inuit would be both benefactors and beneficiaries, as would academic historians and other scholars, by having direct access to interdisciplinary research in Inuit studies. With commitment and vision, anything is possible.

Notes

¹ The word “Arctic” has many definitions to fit a variety of perspectives: geographical, political, economic, environmental, social or intellectual.

² In this context, the original narratives of the polar explorers are not considered history per se, but primary sources of historical fact and opinion to be used in the writing of history. The same holds true for log books, diaries, correspondence, autobiographies, personal interviews, reports and newspaper accounts. Some are more valuable for opinion than for fact.

³ Aside from a few articles, chapters in books and government publications, Canadian scholars seemed content to have British and American historians interpret exploration in the Canadian Arctic.

⁴ For a more detailed explanation, see Shelagh D. Grant, “Imagination and Spirituality: Written Narratives and the Oral Tradition,” *Echoing Silence: Essays on Arctic Narrative*, ed. John Moss (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1997).

⁵ The notable exception was Vilhjalmur Stefansson, whose books were published in Britain and the United States. Although the Canadian government funded his arctic expedition (1913-1918), Stefansson strongly resisted attempts to influence his press reports, lectures and publications. For a list of government reports, see the “Biographical Essay” in Morris Zaslow, *The Opening of the Canadian North, 1870-1914* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1971) 321.

⁶ As examples, see A.E. Millward ed., *Southern Baffin Island: An Account of Exploration, Investigation and Settlement during the Past Fifty Years* (Ottawa: Department of the Interior, 1930); and W.C. Bethune ed., *Canada's Eastern Arctic: Its History, Resources, Population and Administration* (Ottawa: Department of the Interior, 1934). Others appeared in the 1940s and 1950s.

⁷ W.L. Morton, “The ‘North’ in Canadian Historiography,” *Transactions of the Royal Society Series 4.8* (1970): 40.

⁸ Zaslow, *The Opening of the Canadian North*.

⁹ T.H.B. Symons, "The Arctic and Canadian Culture," *A Century of Canada's Arctic Islands, 1880-1980*, ed. Morris Zaslow (Ottawa: Royal Society of Canada, 1981) 327-8.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 331.

¹¹ Notable exceptions were Philip Goldring's studies: "Inuit Economic Responses to Euro-American Contacts: Southeast Baffin Island, 1824-1940," *Historical Papers* (Ottawa: CHA, 1986); and "Religion, Missions, and Native Culture," *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society* 26.2 (1986).

¹² See Marc-Adéland Tremblay and Carole Lévesque, *Québec Social Science and Canadian Indigenous Peoples: An Overview of Research Trends, 1960-1990*, Polaris Papers Number 11, Canadian Polar Commission (August 1997); also Carol Lévesque et al., "Les Savoirs Autochtones du Nord Canadien: une bibliographie annotée des ouvrages de langue Française," prepared for the Canadian Polar Commission, April 1997.

¹³ Notably, Stuart MacKinnon (History, University of Alberta); Richard Diubaldo (History, University of Saskatchewan); Gerry Nixon (History, Royal Roads Military College).

¹⁴ For example, I.S. MacLaren, Professor of History at the University of Alberta, Kenneth Coates, University of Northern British Columbia, and Shelagh Grant, Trent University.

¹⁵ Academic historians writing on these subjects are too numerous to list here but would include such names as Olive Dickason, Kerry Abel, Kenneth Coates, James R. Miller, John Milloy and Arthur J. Ray, to name only a few.

¹⁶ Richard Diubaldo, "The North: Bibliographical and Research Considerations," *Fram: The Journal of Polar Studies* 1.2 (1984): 496.

¹⁷ *Stories from Pangnirtung* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1976).

¹⁸ Susan Cowan ed., *We Don't Live in Snow Houses Now: Reflections of Arctic Bay* (Ottawa: Canadian Arctic Producers, 1976).

¹⁹ Peter Pitseolak and Dorothy Harley Eber, *People from Our Side: A Life Story with Photographs and Oral Biography* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1975) revised edition 1993.

²⁰ Father Guy Mary-Rousselière, *Qitdlarssuaq: The Story of a Polar Migration*, English translation (Winnipeg: Wuerz Publishing, 1991). First published in French in 1980.

²¹ Dorothy Harley Eber's second publication utilized Inuit oral history to describe Inuit participation in the whaling industry: *When the Whalers Were Up North: Inuit Memories from the Eastern Arctic* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989).

²² The state of northern historiography by Canadian authors (academic and others) is covered in more detail in Bruce W. Hodgins and Shelagh D. Grant, "The Canadian North: Trends in Recent Historiography," *Acadiensis* 16.1 (Autumn 1986): 173-88.

²³ See Trevor Levere, *Science and the Canadian Arctic: A Century of Exploration, 1818-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); and Frank James Tester and Peter Kulchyski, *Tammarniit (Mistakes): Inuit Relocation in the Eastern Arctic, 1939-63* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1994). Levere is a historian, currently teaching at the Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology, at Victoria College, University of Toronto. His initial research for this book was carried out at the SPRI. Kulchyski is a historian, teaching in the Native Studies Department in the School of Social Work at the University of British Columbia.

²⁴ Canadians from academia writing arctic history from 1990-1996 include Ronald Romkey (professor of English); Mark O. Dickerson (professor of political science); Peter Schledermann (professor of archaeology); W. Gillies Ross (emeritus professor of geography); Marc G. Stevenson (anthropologist); George Wenzel (professor of human geography); Owen Beattie (professor of anthropology); and Donald Purich (professor of native law), among others. Canadians who recently have edited arctic journals include Ross (above); William Barr (professor of geography); Stuart Houston (professor emeritus of medical imaging); Stuart Jenness (non-academic geologist); and the list goes on.

²⁵ Referring to David Woodman (oceanographic research), *Strangers Among Us* and Marybelle Mitchell (sociologist), *From Talking Chiefs to a Native Corporate Elite: The Birth of Class and Nationalism among Canadian Inuit*. Since I delivered these comments in May 1997, this series has added two new titles: Graham W. Rowley (anthropologist and former bureaucrat), *Cold Comfort: My Love Affair with the Arctic*; and W. Gillies Ross (professor emeritus of geography), *This Distant and Unsurveyed Land: A Woman's Winter at Baffin Island, 1857-1858*.

²⁶ Notably, William R. Morrison, Jon Swainger and the author.

²⁷ These include, among others, Bryan C. Gordon (archaeologist with the Museum of Civilization); David Woodman (officer on an oceanographic research vessel); Marybelle Mitchell (sociologist); and Pat Grygier (clinical psychologist). Aside from personal knowledge, recent bibliographies were used to identify arctic and northern history publications and the professions of their authors. If unknown, the Canadian Historical Association's *Directory of Members* was consulted to verify the authors' primary disciplines.

²⁸ Perhaps the best arctic history appearing in the last four years was Beau Riffenburgh's *The Myth of the Explorer: The Press, Sensationalism, and Geographical Discovery* (London: Belhaven Press, 1993). A close second was the book noted in footnote 23 by historian Trevor Levere, who is currently teaching at the University of Toronto. Also noted is Alan R. Marcus's *Relocating Eden: The Image and Politics of Inuit Exile in the Canadian Arctic*. These were all products of study at the Scott Polar Research Institute and were published by university-associated presses.

²⁹ *International Directory of Arctic Social Scientists*, compiled by Ernest S. Burch Jr. (Arlington, Virginia: National Science Foundation, 1997).

³⁰ R. King et al., "Northern Studies Humanities Research Survey Final Report" (Ottawa: Canadian Polar Commission, 1996) 29.

³¹ Correspondence with the editor of the Native History Study Group, subsequent to the presentation ceremony, reports that the author of the Northern History column, Dr. Charlene Porsild, has moved, or will be moving, to Nebraska.

³² Personal information from Martha Kyak, instructor in Teachers' Education at Arctic College, October 1997.

³³ In addition to my own work utilizing elders' stories for social contact histories of Pond Inlet and Pangnirtung, an exciting publication is rumoured to be imminent on the pre-contact history of Nunavut, based primarily on oral Inuit history and compiled by Susan Rowley and John Bennett. Significantly, neither are Canadian academic historians.

³⁴ For example, William R. Morrison, Kenneth Coates and Richard Diubaldo have all held senior administration positions in the last five or more years, curtailing their teaching contact with undergraduate students, deemed important in stimulating interest in northern graduate studies.

³⁵ Over the years, federal agencies have contributed to arctic historiography, either by hiring historians directly, or by offering contract work to university scholars on sabbatical, to work on internal studies and government publications. Like any studies written for private or public agencies, these do not constitute independent scholarship. Moreover, a good number remain unpublished and thus inaccessible to the general public.

³⁶ The idea of an arctic research centre was discussed as early as the 1930s and resulted in the creation of the Arctic Institute of North America (AINA) in 1945. Initially dependent upon government support and contract work, it has nevertheless provided excellent support for arctic research. Similarly, through its journal, *Arctic*, and other publications, it has provided an effective means of disseminating arctic knowledge to the public. Yet the AINA is not a teaching or degree-granting institution. Dr. Peter Adams MP has more recently promoted the concept of a Canada Polar House.

³⁷ The Arctic Institute of North America has already developed a comprehensive database of arctic research and publications. In co-operation with the AINA, a central agency might assist in updating the system to facilitate receipt and distribution of information, nationally and internationally.

7

Inuit History in the Next Millennium: Challenges and Rewards

First published in *Northern Visions: New Perspectives on the North in Canadian History*, eds. Kerry Abel and Ken S. Coates (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2001), 91-106.

The North is a land of stories. It is as if the land itself—the rivers, the tundra, the eskers, and the seacoasts—are all woven together by the stories of the people who lived there over the last few thousand years. For those people, it is this thing called “the story” that has tied them to the land, and preserved their place in it, and carried their history through the ages.

—David Pelly, 1999¹

At present, there are two distinctly different histories of the Arctic: one focusing on the white man’s experiences, the other on the indigenous people, the Inuit. In terms of Inuit history, there are also two very different versions. Following the oral tradition, Inuit Elders passed down their history in the form of stories and songs, whereas the white man’s interpretation of Inuit history was recorded in a variety of sources, most prominently in detailed studies by ethnographers and archaeologists. Although both recognized the Inuit peoples’ close ties to their environment, the former portrayed the past from an Inuit perspective, the latter from a southern, non-Native viewpoint. With a few exceptions,² Canadian academic historians have shown only minimal interest in Inuit history and as a consequence have contributed relatively little in terms of original research. When incorporating Inuit history into the broader context of Canadian historiography, most historians have relied on government documents and secondary sources, thus perpetuating a southern, non-Inuit view of history. Anthropologists, on the other hand, have been exceptionally successful in integrating Inuit oral history into their studies, and as a result have taken a decisive leadership role in writing

Inuit history. The question raised here is what part, if any, should Canada's academic historians play in future Inuit historiography?

For the purposes of this essay, the North American Arctic is defined as the homeland of the Inuit people, in most cases lying north of the tree line, and crossing national and international boundaries to include Greenland, the Canadian Arctic, and portions of Alaska. In Canada, Inuit reside in the new territory of Nunavut, the northern reaches of the remaining Northwest Territories, northern Quebec (or Nunavik), and northern Labrador. Inuit comprise a large majority of the population in Arctic Canada. In Nunavut, the figure ranges between eighty and eighty-five per cent; in Nunavik, it is even higher. This discussion will focus on the history of the Canadian Inuit, with only passing references to the status in Alaska and Greenland. On occasion, the Inuktitut word *Qallunaat* (*Qallunaaq* in the singular) will be used to refer to the white man. Similarly, *Inuit*, meaning "the people" (*Inuk* in the singular), is used throughout rather than *Eskimo*, a term derived from a derogatory Cree Indian word meaning "eaters of raw meat."

Inspiration for this commentary grew out of my research into the history of early social contact relationships between the Inuit of North Baffin and the white man.³ Two previously published papers provided background and context: one discussing the present and future of Arctic historiography, the other comparing two forms of Arctic history—the written narrative and the oral tradition.⁴ My objective here is to outline the current status of Inuit historiography, the inherent problems faced by historians, and how they might participate in the future.

One might argue that the status of Inuit historiography today is similar to that of northern historiography thirty years ago, when the eminent Canadian historian W.L. Morton issued a warning that "the North is yet to be integrated into the historiography of Canada."⁵ Yet direct comparison fails, since a great deal of Inuit history is being written by anthropologists, archaeologists, and even by the Inuit themselves, although very little by historians teaching at Canadian universities. Admittedly, cross-cultural interpretation involves more than translation, as one must factor in the degree to which Inuit society *understands things differently*. As a result, the best and most comprehensive history of the Inuit people may someday be written by an Inuk, who better understands the cultural nuances and emotional ties that link their present lives to the past. In the interim, academic historians must ask themselves whether they have a responsibility to help bridge the cultural divide by adding an Inuit voice to their writing. The beginning of a new millennium offers an opportunity to consider the options and adopt new approaches.

Current State of Inuit Historiography

Traditionally, Canadian academic historians have considered Arctic history to be a part of northern history, just as Inuit history was seen as a sub-category of Native history. In spite of the apparent apathy shown toward the Inuit social history, this has not been the case with northern Indians, as evident in Kerry Abel's *Drum Songs*, Ken Coates's *Best Left as Indians*, and John Milloy's *A National Crime*, to name a few.⁶ These and other historians use extensive archival documentation but include interviews and letters to offer new insights into the Indian perception of situations and events. The growing interest in Amerindian social history coincides with greater public awareness of Indian land claims, the recognition of Aboriginal rights in the Canadian constitution, and the growth of Native Studies programs at Canadian universities.

In spite of the recent settlement of Inuit claims and advances in self-government, Inuit history tends to be marginalized in most, if not all, of the current Native Studies programs. This same marginalization is evident in Native history books, using Olive Dickason's *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times* as an example. This is an excellent book by a top scholar, but Inuit history is covered in less than ten pages.⁷ Similarly, an anthology titled *Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History*⁸ has only one essay out of twenty that discusses the Inuit. William R. Morrison's *True North: The Yukon and Northwest Territories* presents a slightly different picture. Although the text clearly focuses on the white man's activities and government policies in the North, the Inuit presence is overly represented in photographs and art to give at least a visual illusion of the degree of their involvement.⁹

With the exception of a few individuals, the historical profession as a whole has yet to show any great interest in researching and writing Inuit history. A partial explanation may be found in the origins of Arctic historiography and Inuit ethnography. Our first knowledge of the North American Arctic was derived from the published journals and diaries of the polar explorers, beginning with Martin Frobisher in the 1570s, followed two centuries later by Samuel Hearne and then in the 1820s by John Ross, William Parry, and John Rae. In the mid-nineteenth century, those searching for the lost Franklin expedition wrote numerous accounts. These narratives all included descriptions of the Inuit as primitive curiosities, but with the notable exception of the account by American C.F. Hall, the authors focused on the exploits of the naval expeditions and their heroic efforts to survive in an alien and unforgiving environment. Not surprisingly, subsequent interpretations by historians would centre on the white man's discoveries, his adventures and achievements.

Inuit history, as written from a Qallunaat perspective, began with ethnographers such as Franz Boas and Henry Rink in the late nineteenth century,

followed in the next century by Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Knud Rasmussen, Kaj Birket-Smith, Therkel Mathiassen, and Diamond Jenness. Their sole objective was to study Inuit culture. As Renée Hulan has pointed out, their descriptions of the Inuit were presented in a much different manner than those of the polar explorers:

Historically, the institutionalization of professional ethnography as monographs describing fieldwork ... coincides with a prolific period of travel writing at the end of the nineteenth century. Ethnographers of the time chose the detached authoritative narrative tone characteristic of scientific writing, replacing the first-person point of view used in writing by explorers and travel writers, with the third-person, omniscient point of view in order to distinguish ethnography from popular travel accounts.¹⁰

There was also a divergence in the methodologies employed by the ethnographers and the historians. The former based their studies on extensive fieldwork, whereas the latter relied upon the exploration narratives and government documents for resource material. Inherent in this difference was the opportunity for the ethnographers to witness the Inuit first-hand, compared to the historians' dependency on secondary sources for their interpretations of Inuit culture. Yet even with the concerted effort to maintain professional objectivity, the early ethnographers would still be influenced to some degree by the perceptual bias of the western world.

Published reports of the Canadian government expeditions to the Eastern Arctic, led by A.P. Low in 1903-04 and followed by Captain J.E. Bernier from 1905-11, also included some first-hand descriptions of the Inuit, although some accounts seemed vaguely similar to observations found in earlier narratives. Subsequent government publications tended to generalize Inuit circumstances and practices, ignoring the regional diversity of Inuit culture throughout the Arctic. Descriptions of Inuit also appeared in popular literature written by southerners who travelled north in the 1920s and 1930s, such as scientists, missionaries, fur traders, and mounted police. Based on personal experiences, many accounts were obvious exaggerations due to publishers' demands for drama and adventure to promote book sales. Unlike the professional studies, the Arctic adventure stories were designed to appeal to a general readership, which was also being exposed to visual images in photographs and documentary films. By mid-century, most Canadians believed they were well informed about the Arctic, although very few had been there. Following in the tradition of their British counterparts, several Canadian historians began writing about polar explorations and scientific achievements, but Inuit history was left to the anthropologists and archaeologists.

By the 1980s, general interest in the North seemed to centre on environmental concerns, government policies, and political developments, particularly as they affected the northern Indians. Social history was in vogue, particularly among younger historians, with ethno-history becoming an increasingly popular choice in the search for new fields of study. Because of the early missionary schools, Indian viewpoints could be found in correspondence and verified against oral history interviews conducted in English or French. In this manner, the costs of field research could be kept to a minimum, as most Indian settlements in the North were relatively accessible by road or boat. This was not the case if one wished to acquire an Inuit perspective. Moreover, extensive fieldwork in remote regions was alien to a historian's formal training, which still emphasized archival sources as the primary focus for original research.

Therefore, the responsibility for writing Inuit history would fall to the anthropologists and archaeologists, joined later by a number of geographers who also spent considerable time in the field. Some of these studies are outstanding. The anthropologists and archaeologists of the Canadian Museum of Civilization, for example, have contributed greatly to our knowledge of pre-contact history. Moreover, the museum's publication program has made their studies available to the general public in easy-to-read formats with ample coloured illustrations.¹¹ The Smithsonian Institute in Washington also published an excellent anthology of scholarly papers on the history and culture of North American Inuit, yet of the twenty contributors from Canada, only Leslie H. Neatby was listed as a historian. Indicative of the predominant interest in the profession, his chapter was titled "Exploration and History of the Canadian Arctic" and contained only eight paragraphs on "Eskimo History."¹² On the other hand, the journal *Études/Inuit/Studies*, published jointly by the Inuit and Circumpolar Study Group (GÉTIC) and Association Inuksiutiit Katimajit, has become the most highly regarded source for Inuit history in Canada. Understandably, most of the contributors are anthropologists.

A partial explanation for historians' reluctance to become involved in the writing of Inuit history may be traced to the nature of the Inuktitut language. When the Qallunaat first arrived in the Arctic, the Inuit had no written language until missionaries sought means to transcribe their oral language onto paper so they might better understand the teachings of the Bible. Even then, the form and introduction of a written language differed by region. In the mid-1700s, Lutheran missionaries in Greenland were the first to introduce a written form of Inuktitut using Roman orthography. Later, Moravians introduced a slightly different version to the Labrador Inuit. By the mid-1800s, both Anglican and Roman Catholic missionaries in the Eastern Arctic were using a syllabic version of Inuktitut, based on an alphabet initially created by the Wesleyan missionary

James Evans for use with the Cree Indians. In the Western Arctic, missionaries used a Roman orthography version, whereas in Alaska, a form of picture writing was first introduced, then discarded. These early initiatives developed independently of each other. Today, the syllabic form is more common in the Eastern Arctic, whereas Roman orthography is used exclusively in the Western Arctic. To add to the confusion, the diversity of dialects throughout the Arctic has made it difficult to develop a common standard for either version.¹³ Similarly, many Elders' phrases are said to belong to the "old language" and are not readily understood by younger generations. In this regard, anthropologists like Bernard Saladin d'Anglure, Louis-Jacques Dorais, Christopher Trott, Frédéric Laugrand, and Susan Rowley—all of whom have spent extended periods of time in the Arctic—had a distinct advantage in being able to tap the wealth of information found in Inuit oral history.

For many decades, direct access to the Elders' stories was denied to scholars who relied upon written records. This would eventually change because of initiatives taken by Inuit leaders to preserve their history on tape. In the late 1950s, the practice of placing Inuit children in southern residential schools and educating them in English raised concerns that the Inuktitut language might die out altogether. To avoid an irretrievable loss of their oral history, a number of taped interview projects were initiated, initially on a volunteer basis with loaned equipment. These projects grew in size and were eventually supported by territorial and federal government funding. In the Western Arctic, the tapes were initially stored at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) station in Inuvik and in time became known as the COPE (Committee for Original Peoples' Entitlement) Collection. The Canadian Council of Archives, the Donner Foundation, and the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation provided additional funds to preserve these tapes. At last count, over a thousand stories have been duplicated, translated, and computerized. Copies were sent to the relevant communities, while a second set of copies and the originals were deposited in the archives of the Northwest Territories (NWT) at Yellowknife. Another collection of tapes, the culmination of twenty years' work by two Oblate priests, was also duplicated and made available to the NWT archives.¹⁴ Similar projects were undertaken at Pangnirtung, Arctic Bay, Igloolik, and more recently at Lake Harbour, Pond Inlet, and Grise Fiord. CBC North in Iqaluit has a large collection of taped interviews. Some have been transcribed and translated into English; others have not. The condition of these tapes is reportedly precarious, in spite of recent efforts to have them duplicated for distribution to the originating community. For southern scholars, access to the taped interviews usually requires approval by the appropriate hamlet council.

In 1959, the Indian and Northern Affairs Branch of the federal government initiated the publication of a magazine to help retain a written record of traditional stories. Now called *Inuktitut*, it was taken over by the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada in 1989 with the objective of maintaining “a cultural magazine serving Canadian Inuit.” Today, all the stories are written by Inuit and appear simultaneously in English, French, and Inuktitut. As the magazine celebrates its fortieth year of publication, the editorial staff takes pride in having inspired a generation of accomplished Inuit writers such as Armand Tagoona, Martha Tunnuq, Arnaitok Ipellie, Daisy Watt, and others.¹⁵ In the 1970s, the federal government also funded efforts to edit and publish some of the taped interviews, as in the case of *Stories from Panguit* and *We Don’t Live in Snow Houses Now: Reflections of Arctic Bay*. As well, Robin Gedalof compiled stories that had appeared elsewhere and published them in a volume titled *Paper Stays Put: A Collection of Inuit Writing*.¹⁶ All are illustrated with photographs or Inuit drawings.

In 1999, the Language and Culture Program at Nunavut Arctic College at Iqaluit published two paperback series of oral-history interviews, under the supervision of its director, Susan Sammons. Appearing in both English and Inuktitut, these books contain Elders’ stories and descriptions as told in interviews with the program’s students and facilitated by the college’s faculty members, along with graduate students and senior anthropologists from Laval and Memorial Universities, and several European scholars. Each interview is accompanied by a short, introductory description.¹⁷ This ambitious venture is an important step in the transposition of oral history into written narrative, and is marred only by a tendency to ignore the regional distinctiveness of various traditions and practices described by Elders from widely scattered communities. Significantly, no Canadian historians have yet been asked to participate in the project.

Others have attempted to integrate Inuit stories into their interpretations of history, but with mixed results. Penny Petrone and Mary Crnkovich, for instance, both gathered together stories from across the Arctic for their books, thus inadvertently blending local circumstances and events into a somewhat homogenized view of Inuit culture.¹⁸ By comparison, anthropologist Richard Condon¹⁹ and amateur archaeologist Father Guy Mary-Rousselière²⁰ were more successful when they limited their histories to specific locations, as was long-time northern resident and director of the Igloolik Research Centre John MacDonald, with his magnificent book on Inuit legends and star lore.²¹ In all three books, Inuit stories are quoted at length from original transcripts, thus allowing their unique ways of expressing ideas to remain intact. Freelance researcher Dorothy Harley Eber also used Elders’ stories to describe the early whaling industry,²² as

did psychologist Pat Grygier in her history of the tuberculosis epidemic among the Inuit.²³ The conscious inclusion of an Inuit voice by writers other than anthropologists marked the beginning of a new era in Inuit historiography.

There are also indications that some Inuit are interested in writing their own history, initially in the form of translated autobiographies, such as *I, Nuligak*, or the life story of Peter Pitseolak, which was based on his diaries and photographs.²⁴ Both were translated into English from Inuktitut. In 1986, with the help of David Pelly, Ruth Annaqtuusi Tulurialik from Baker Lake published a book of sketches and recollections of Inuit life.²⁵ Others began writing about different aspects of Inuit history. In 1993, for example, Greenlander Aqqaluk Lynge wrote a history of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference,²⁶ and four years later, Mary May Simon, now Canada's Circumpolar Ambassador, provided the historical background to the key issues confronting Inuit today in *Inuit: One Future—One Arctic*.²⁷ Other initiatives are in process. In 1998, for example, the Baffin Island Board of Education began using Elders' stories recorded at Pond Inlet to write a history text in Inuktitut for their primary school curriculum.²⁸ These are only harbingers of what we might expect in the future.

Given the virtual explosion of Inuit historiography in the last decade, the lack of involvement by academic historians is troubling. With the exception of myself and Peter Kulchyski, it appears that none has expressed any interest in participating in current oral history projects. Moreover, while there have been many partnerships established between southern universities and the two Arctic colleges, there has been little effort to establish liaisons between their history faculties and Inuit educators. To remedy this situation will require expressed interest by historians and a major shift in research methods to place a much greater emphasis on fieldwork, outreach programs, and interdisciplinary team projects.

Challenges Facing the Historians

After ignoring Inuit history for so many years, the onus is now on the academic historians to show why their research and writing might be of value to the Inuit people. As a first step, the profession as a whole must seriously consider whether there is a significant role for it in the growing field of Inuit historiography, or whether it is too late to participate in a meaningful way. Review of recent works by anthropologists suggests that more research into the Qallunaat perspective on contact relationships may provide better background and context in which to place their studies based on Inuit oral history, particularly with regard to the first half of the twentieth century. While there is ample information on government policy initiatives, or the lack thereof, the manner and degree to which they were implemented can only be determined by a more rigorous examination of RCMP

detachment files, fur trade and missionary records, and personal papers. Much of this material has been accessible to researchers only in the last decade or so. Since most historians are well trained in the methodology of archival research, this opportunity may provide the first step to becoming involved in the field of Inuit historiography. Even then, archival research must be accompanied by experience in the field. Reading secondary sources or meeting Inuit in a southern setting is not sufficient to fully comprehend the degree to which their environment and culture have affected their own lives and their attitudes toward others. Without this understanding, one is unlikely to recognize what archival information is relevant and what is extraneous. Would scholars consider writing British imperial history based on archival sources without visiting and conducting at least a portion of their research in the colonies? I think not. Similarly, historians must first familiarize themselves with the Arctic and its people before contemplating writing Inuit history.

There are other reasons to encourage a historian's active participation. The increasing use of the Inuit voice in anthropological studies is invaluable in studying contact relationships, but it becomes even more significant when balanced with an accurate representation of the perceptions and attitudes driving non-Native actions. As one example, my archival research uncovered a view expressed by some government officials in the 1920s that the Inuit were "like children" and should be treated as such. Yet interviews with Elders who had worked for the RCMP at Pond Inlet in later years revealed their own feelings of superiority when they described how the police on patrol often behaved "like children" and had to be looked after. While anthropologists have contributed greatly to the white man's understanding of Inuit culture, more research is necessary to show how perceptual differences affected early contact relationships, and whether they had a lasting effect on attitudes through to the present. At this stage, such studies may be best accomplished through interdisciplinary team research—a concept most historians have yet to embrace with any great enthusiasm.

Another deterrent for historians is the high cost involved in researching Inuit oral history. At the outset, air travel becomes a prerequisite, as one can reach the more remote communities of the Eastern and Central Arctic only by connecting flights from Iqaluit, Winnipeg, or Yellowknife, some of which run only two or three days a week. The price of a ticket to fly from Iqaluit to Pond Inlet, as an example, can be as much as or greater than the cost of flying from Toronto to Iqaluit. Furthermore, smaller communities have only one hotel. In the busy summer months, the cost of a single room with or without bath would be prohibitive for graduate students, as are the charges for meals. Unless with a group, camping on the tundra is not advised unless one comes prepared to deal

with polar bears, stray husky dogs, and curious children. The best alternative is to seek accommodation with an Inuit family, an option that is more feasible if one's supervisor has had previous connections to the community.

There are other expenses involved. The cost of a reliable interpreter, for example, may seem exorbitant by southern standards, yet the quality of translation is fundamental to successful research. Moreover, because of the difficulty in learning the various dialects and nuances of Inuktitut, it is practically impossible to learn the language sufficiently to transcribe and translate interviews with any degree of accuracy. As noted earlier, it is not simply a matter of literal translation, but one of understanding things differently. In the final analysis, the cost of an Inuit oral history project is beyond the means of most graduate history students unless there is a major increase in available funding for social scientists. Unfortunately, historians have tended to prefer individual research, whereas the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council tends toward supporting team projects.

Another potential deterrent for graduate students is the need to obtain a research licence to conduct even informal interviews. Licences have been required for scientific research in the Arctic since the 1920s, but regulations now apply equally for research in the social sciences and humanities. Anyone researching in the Arctic must apply, whether scholars, government employees, or those working for private corporations. Moreover, the application process is not overly complicated and is clearly explained in the accompanying guidelines. Once a project has been approved by one's supervisor or department head, in the case of university scholars, or by the appropriate official in the public or private sector, the application is submitted to the relevant licensing body in Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, Quebec, or Labrador. A copy is then forwarded to the hamlet council of the community involved, which must review the proposal to ensure that the project is of potential benefit to the residents.

The approval process has generated numerous complaints about inconvenience and delays. Although most are a result of incomplete or late applications, the two research institutes responsible for licensing in the Eastern and Western Arctic have facilitated matters by allowing applications to be downloaded from their websites and submitted online. Some complaints proved to be unjustified. One student, for instance, reported that he was refused permission to publish his research findings, yet on further inquiry it was found that he had gone beyond the parameters of the approved application. In another case, a researcher was sent home because of misbehaviour in the community. Bruce Rigby, science advisor for the Nunavut government, reported that some scholars resent the process, believing that as Canadian citizens they should have

unrestricted rights to academic freedom and intellectual sovereignty. But Inuit leaders maintain that they have the right to protect the interests of their people.²⁹

In terms of oral history projects, such concerns are very specific. Inuit consider their Elders' stories to be community property that they are not willing to hand over to southern scholars without restriction. Their fears are two-fold: first, that their history might be misinterpreted due to ignorance of cultural traditions, and second, that visiting scholars may use the interviews for personal gain without providing adequate recognition and compensation to the Elders. For scholars unfamiliar with Inuit history or culture, these views may seem unreasonable, but from an Inuit perspective, past incidents have made them suspicious and cynical after witnessing strangers coming to their communities to ask questions, some of them very personal, then failing to return and explain how their research had benefitted their people. Inevitably, the restrictions have caused a few to try to circumvent the process. However, to discourage "visitors" from arriving in a community, asking questions, and subsequently publishing their version of Inuit stories, there is now legislation that includes hefty fines and jail terms for non-compliance with the licensing regulations and procedures.

The licensing process is a particularly sensitive issue, but one easily overcome with discretion and consideration. For graduate students, it may be seen as one more reason to avoid involvement in Inuit historiography. Universities have always required the use of consent forms and prior approval by ethics committees for research involving personal interviews, but the need to gain approval from an entire community is a relatively new phenomenon—one that should be accepted with grace, if not enthusiasm. What might appear to be an obstacle could become a positive factor if an oral history project has the support of the entire community.

Unlike oral history projects conducted in the south, the remote location, in combination with Inuit cultural differences and language, greatly complicates the interview process. An Inuit oral history project should be carefully planned in advance, but with built-in flexibility to adapt to the unexpected. This may entail a preliminary visit to the community to assess the potential and set up tentative arrangements. Of key importance is the selection of an Inuk translator, who should be a respected resident of the community. Since most Elders speak only Inuktitut, finding the right person may be the most important factor in the success of the project. If possible, it may even be wise to hire the translator as an on-site coordinator to assure continuing rapport with the Elders and the community at large. Equally important is the selection of the Elders to be interviewed to ensure that each individual is an acknowledged expert on themes under study. Age alone does not qualify an Inuk to become an Elder; they must be respected by the community for their knowledge and wisdom.

The format of the interviews should also be carefully planned in advance and discussed with the translator or project coordinator. A simple question-and-answer format will likely produce inferior results, as some Elders may be tempted to give answers they think the researcher wants to hear. A better approach is first to explain the purpose of the research by way of simultaneous translation at a group meeting and suggest that anyone having relevant stories or information should contact the translator personally. Sometimes it is preferable to simply ask what each Elder would like to talk about and make a final selection based on individual interests. How interviews are recorded is also important. Since body language is sometimes critical to accurately transcribe the stories into written Inuktitut, the best method is to videotape the interviews as back-up to an audio recording. Ideally, both the transcriber and the person responsible for translating the Inuktitut version into English should be residents of the community to allow them to verify any uncertainties that may arise from the recordings. Similarly, a historian may discover that the translated interviews have raised further questions that may require a return trip to the community and further discussion.

Integrating the Elders' stories with material from other sources may prove more difficult than anticipated. An Inuk will often tell a story in concentric circles, weaving the tale back and forward before ending up approximately where he or she began. Connecting the Inuit version with the Qallunaat's linear view of history requires finding points where the circles intersect the line. Interrupting a story with a question may cause an Elder to lose concentration and stop entirely, or in some cases, to start over at the beginning. Patience, on the other hand, often brings unexpected rewards. Historians should also resist the temptation to paraphrase an Elder's narrative to eliminate repetition, as it will inevitably add a southern bias to the story. One approach may be to keep the Inuit wording unchanged and set up the stories as lengthy quotations alongside the linear chronology of the Qallunaat narrative. In this way, the two perceptions of history stand in juxtaposition, creating a ready means of comparison. Cross-cultural research demands both creativity and caution to ensure a proper balance of perspectives and avoid misrepresentation.

Graduate students may find it easier to adapt to new research techniques, but they first must find financial support and encouragement from their supervisors. Otherwise, the current apathy even toward Inuit history and Arctic history in general will become self-perpetuating. The *International Directory of Arctic Social Scientists*, an American publication appearing in 1997, confirmed the lack of interest among historians teaching at Canadian universities. Its list and profiles of 1006 recognized "Arctic Social Scientists" around the world included members of the medical profession, sociologists, anthropologists, archaeologists, geographers, educationalists, and historians. Of the 263 Canadian social

scientists reportedly interested in the Arctic, only fifteen listed history as their major field of study. A further breakdown is even more revealing. Of the fifteen, three worked for the government, two were long retired, two were students, and three were private consultants. Of the five listed as teaching history at post-secondary institutions, two were employed by Yukon College, and one was teaching part-time, leaving only two in regular teaching positions at Canadian universities.³⁰ The apparent consequence of this situation is reflected in a survey of grant applications submitted to the Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies (ACUNS). In 1988, eight undergraduate history students had applied for Northern [Scientific Training Program grants] out of a total of 291. By 1995, that number had fallen to one.³¹ Since the grants were for research in both the Arctic and sub-Arctic, it appears that history professors are not promoting student research anywhere in the North. Finding the means to reverse this trend is yet another challenge facing the historical profession.

Some may ask why Canadian historians need to bother conducting their own research if other scholars are already writing Inuit history. Why not just reference the works by anthropologists and other scholars? While many of these studies are excellent in terms of their respective disciplines, the accuracy of historical detail is sometimes inadequate or may appear in the improper context. Once published, errors and unfounded assumptions become accepted as fact and go unquestioned by others who repeat the inaccuracies in their own studies.³² The need for historians' participation also arises with regard to the trend toward comparative studies, a consequence of the shrinking world and a widening global vision. As an example, Richard Vaughan, former chair of the Arctic Centre at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands, has written an excellent history of the Arctic regions of both the eastern and western hemispheres, based primarily on secondary sources.³³ One glance at the bibliography reveals the absence of an Inuit voice. Through no fault of the author, the history of the Canadian Arctic is once again witnessed through a somewhat myopic, southern vision.

Opportunities and Rewards

At present, the historical profession stands at a crossroads with regard to Inuit social history. The argument against appropriation of Aboriginal history does not seem applicable here, as others have already shown that an Inuit voice can be incorporated into their writing of Inuit history without reinterpreting their words or failing to give full recognition to the source. This was particularly evident in recent publications by John MacDonald and the late Richard Condon. Although not historians, they nevertheless have created models that can easily be adapted to any number of disciplines, history included. Otherwise, the most limiting factors to historians' participation are a lack of first-hand experience and an

absence of conviction. Veteran researchers will argue that the two factors are interdependent—that only experience in the field will inspire commitment to Arctic research, which in turn encourages a desire for more fieldwork.

Aside from field research as a means of acquiring first-hand experience, partnership and collaboration with Inuit educators at the Arctic colleges could lead to new opportunities for direct involvement. History professors might also join with those in other disciplines to develop interdisciplinary team projects. This approach would not only facilitate the sharing of knowledge among graduate students, but would likely help alleviate cost concerns, given Canada's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council's current preference for team research. Unfortunately, increased funding will not guarantee the cooperation of Inuit communities. Researchers must be able to offer something in return, perhaps by offering to give talks to school children and adult gatherings, by showing videos made of early film clips of the Eastern Arctic Patrol, or perhaps by donating copies of pertinent photographs from collections in southern archives. As historians, we are inclined to think in terms of the past. Perhaps now is the time to think of the past in terms of the future, and what knowledge we might be able to share with the Inuit people.

American scholars have already reviewed strategies for future studies of the indigenous peoples of the Arctic. A report published by the Arctic Research Consortium of the United States (ARCUS) titled *People and the Arctic: A Prospectus for Research on the Human Dimensions of the Arctic System* recommended that historians should consult Elders' oral narratives in addition to archival sources and other documentation.³⁴ By comparison, the Canadian Polar Commission's recent report on its baseline dataset for polar research (beginning in 1998) makes only a general delineation between the natural sciences and engineering, the social sciences and humanities, and the medical field. Moreover, there is no differentiation between Inuit and northern Indians in reference to the twenty-two research projects reported to have had a traditional knowledge component. Considering this agency has a mandate to monitor, promote public awareness, and disseminate knowledge of the polar regions, it would seem to be a first priority to establish exactly what kind of polar research is currently underway.³⁵ Although seemingly disconcerting at first glance, there may be windows of opportunity. With the launch of the new University of the Arctic, for instance, historians might become involved by offering a course on the techniques of writing Inuit history, perhaps as a prerequisite to studying Inuit history.

Canadian academic historians must seriously consider what role they wish to play, if any, in the writing of Inuit history. Repeating the words of David Pelly quoted at the outset, "it is this thing called 'the story' that has tied them to the

land, and preserved their place in it, and carried their history through the ages.” Without an Inuit voice telling their story, there can be no true representation of Inuit history. Yet without the active participation of the Canadian historical profession, it will be difficult to incorporate Inuit history into the fabric of Canadian social history. The challenges are many—as are the opportunities and rewards.

Notes

¹ David F. Pelly, quoted from his presentation at the Wilderness Symposium, Toronto, January 1999.

² There have been a number of articles examining Inuit policies and their consequences, but to my knowledge, only three book-length studies have been written by Canadian historians: Richard Diubaldo, *The Government of Canada and the Inuit, 1900-1967* (Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs, 1985); William R. Morrison, *Under the Flag: Canadian Sovereignty and the Native People in Northern Canada* (Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs, 1984); and Frank James Tester and Peter Kulchyski, *Tammarniit (Mistakes): Inuit Relocation in the Eastern Arctic, 1939-63* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1994). Kulchyski's academic background is in history. A fourth book is expected to appear in 2001: Shelagh D. Grant, *Arctic Justice: On Trial for Murder, Pond Inlet, 1923* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press).

³ Shelagh Grant, “Mittimatalik Pond Inlet: 2000 BC to 1939 AD.” This study is currently in the form of research notes for private distribution to the Elders of Pond Inlet. Portions have been expanded for inclusion in *Arctic Justice: On Trial for Murder, Pond Inlet, 1923*. The remainder will provide the basis of a social history of North Baffin.

⁴ Shelagh Grant, “Arctic Historiography: Current Status and Blueprints for the Future,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 33:1 (Spring 1998); also “Imagination and Spirituality: Written Narratives and the Oral Tradition,” *Echoing Silence: Essays on Arctic Narrative*, ed. John Moss (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1997).

⁵ W.L. Morton, “The ‘North’ in Canadian Historiography,” *Transactions of the Royal Society*, Series 4:8 (1970): 40.

⁶ Kerry Abel, *Drum Songs: Glimpses of Dene History* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993); Ken S. Coates, *Best Left as Indians: Native-White Relations in the Yukon Territory, 1840-1973* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991); John S. Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879 to 1986* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999).

⁷ Olive Patricia Dickason, *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1992). References to Inuit history are found at 378-82, 395-99, and 413-16.

⁸ Jennifer S.H. Brown and Elizabeth Vibert, eds., *Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1996).

⁹ William R. Morrison, *True North: The Yukon and Northwest Territories* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1998).

¹⁰ Renée Hulan, "Literary Field Notes: The Influence of Ethnography on Representations of the North," Sherrill Grace, ed., *Essays in Canadian Writing: Representing North*, 59 (Fall 1996): 147-48.

¹¹ As examples, see David Morrison and Georges-Hébert Germain, *Inuit: Glimpse of an Arctic Past* (Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1995); and Robert McGhee, *Ancient Canada* (Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1989).

¹² David Damas, ed., *Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 5: Arctic* (Washington: Smithsonian Institute, 1984). For the chapter by L.H. Neatby, see pages 377-90.

¹³ See Kenn Harper, "Writing in Inuktitut: An Historical Perspective," from *North: Landscape of the Imagination* (Ottawa: National Library of Canada, revised 1998).

¹⁴ Nellie Cournoyea, "Documenting the Oral History of the Inuvialuit," a presentation to the Arctic Symposium, University of Ottawa, 21 April 1995.

¹⁵ Introduction by J. Okalik Egeesias, President of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITC), *Inuktitut* #85 (1999).

¹⁶ *Stories from Pangnirtung*, illustrated by Germaine Arnaktauyok (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1976); Susan Cowan, ed., *We don't live in snow houses now: Reflections of Arctic Bay*, trans. Rhoda Inuksuk and others (Winnipeg: Canadian Arctic Producers, 1976); Robin Gedalof, ed., *Paper Stays Put: A Collection of Inuit Writing*, illustrated by Alooook Ipellie (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1981).

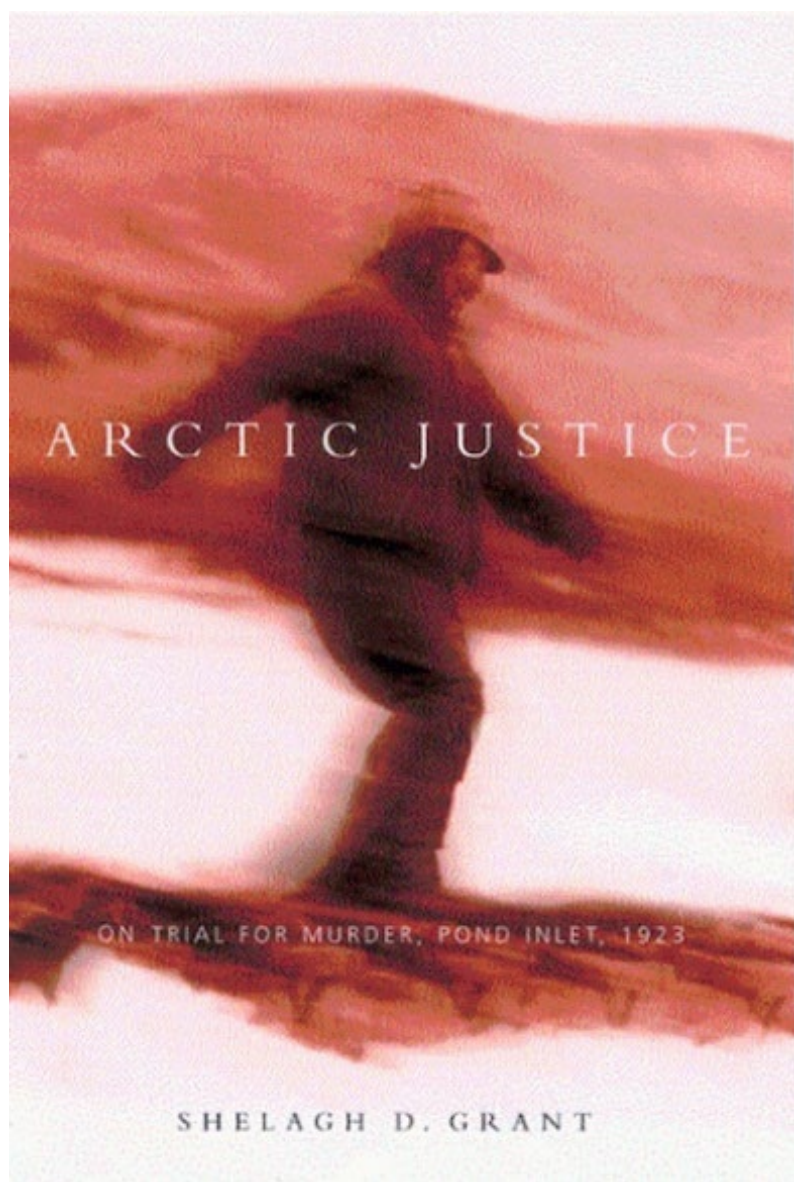
¹⁷ As examples see Saullu Nakasuk et al., *Interviewing Inuit Elders: Volume 1 Introduction*, eds. Jarich Oosten and Frédéric Laugrand (Iqaluit: Nunavut Arctic College, 1999); Mariano Aupilaarjuk et al., *Interviewing Inuit Elders: Volume 2, Perspectives on Traditional Law*, eds. Jarich Oosten, Frédéric Laugrand, and Wim Rasing (Iqaluit: Nunavut Arctic College, 1999); Victor Tungilik and Rachel Uyarasuk, *Inuit Perspectives on the 20th Century: Volume 1, The Transition to Christianity*, eds. Jarich Oosten and Frédéric Laugrand (Iqaluit: Nunavut Arctic College, 1999).

¹⁸ Penny Petrone, *Northern Voices: Inuit Writing in English* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988) and Mary Crynkovich, "Gossip": *A Spoken History of Women in the North* (Ottawa: Canadian Arctic Resources Committee, 1990).

¹⁹ Richard Condon, *The Northern Copper Inuit: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

²⁰ Guy Mary-Rousselière, *Qitdlarsuaq: The Story of a Polar Migration* (Winnipeg: Wuerz Publishing Ltd., 1991).

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- ²¹ John MacDonald, *The Arctic Sky: Inuit Astronomy, Star Lore, and Legend* (Toronto/Iqaluit: Royal Ontario Museum and Nunavut Research Institute, 1998).
- ²² Dorothy Harley Eber, *When the Whalers Were Up North: Inuit Memories from the Eastern Arctic* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989).
- ²³ Pat Sandiford Grygier, *A Long Way from Home: The Tuberculosis Epidemic among the Inuit* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994).
- ²⁴ I, *Nuligak*, ed. and trans. Maurice Metayer (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1966); and Peter Pitseolak and Dorothy Harley Eber, translation of manuscript by Ann Hanson, *People from Our Side: A Life Story with Photographs and Oral Biography* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993).
- ²⁵ Ruth Annaqtuusi Tulurialik and David Pelly, *Qikaaluktut: Images of Inuit Life* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1986).
- ²⁶ Aqqaluk Lynge, *Inuit: The Story of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference* (Nuuk, Greenland: Atuakkiorfik, 1993).
- ²⁷ Mary May Simon, *Inuit: One Future—One Arctic* (Peterborough: The Cider Press, 1997).
- ²⁸ Personal information obtained from Martha Kyak of Pond Inlet, who prepared the text about an episode of Inuit starvation to be used in the school curriculum.
- ²⁹ Personal communication, 10 January 2000.
- ³⁰ *International Directory of Arctic Social Scientists*, compiled by Ernest S. Burch Jr. (Arlington, VA: National Science Foundation, 1997).
- ³¹ R. King, F. Duerden, P. Johnson, and J. Oakes, *Northern Studies Humanities Research Survey Final Report* (Ottawa: Canadian Polar Commission, 1996).
- ³² As an example, see Marc Stevenson, *Inuit, Whalers and Cultural Persistence: Structure in Cumberland Sound and Central Inuit Social Organization* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997). Here the author claimed that Angmarlik had visited Pond Inlet as a lay preacher in 1920, a mistaken identity on the author's part.
- ³³ Richard Vaughan, *The Arctic: A History* (London: Alan Sutton, 1994).
- ³⁴ Arctic Research Consortium of the United States, *People and the Arctic: A Prospectus for Research on the Human Dimensions of the Arctic System* (Fairbanks, AK: May 1997).
- ³⁵ Canadian Polar Commission, *Developing Indicators on Canadian Polar Knowledge: Establishing the 1998 Baseline* (Ottawa: June 2000).



Section 2

History, Nationalism, and Justice

8

George M. Douglas and the Lure of the Coppermine

First published in *Nastawgan: The Canadian North by Canoe & Snowshoe*, eds. Bruce W. Hodgins and Margaret Hobbs (Toronto: Betelgeuse Books, 1985), 99-116.

The object of the present unostentatious expedition was to make a preliminary investigation of the Coppermine mountains, to determine whether there was any analogy between these deposits and those of the Lake Superior district, and to decide whether the prospect was sufficiently promising to warrant investigation on a further more comprehensive scale.

George M. Douglas, 1914.

The wilderness regions north of frontier settlement have long held a special fascination for Canadians. At the time of Confederation, the image of a land beyond was given further definition by the vague notion that a great destiny lay in future development of this vast inhospitable land. In 1898, the Klondike gold rush added a new dimension to the mystique of the North—the promise of unexploited mineral wealth. Coinciding with a period of growing nationalist sentiment, countless books and articles on the Yukon stirred the imagination of southerners, creating new heroes and great expectations while at the same time reinforcing a romantic vision of the country's northern heritage. Lands formerly traversed only by explorers, fur traders, missionaries and Mounted Police were eyed with increasing interest by prospectors and developers. One such individual was George Mellis Douglas, who in 1911 led a small party to the Coppermine Mountains to investigate the nature and extent of reported ore deposits. The Douglas story is of particular interest in that it marks a transitional phase between the "purposeful wanderers" of the late nineteenth century and the mid-twentieth-century scientists, prospectors and surveyors whose countless forays into the

North were conducted primarily in the interests of their professions. The age of discovery gave way to an age of development. George Douglas represented both.

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The expedition led by Douglas was very much a family affair funded by an elderly cousin who had amassed a considerable fortune in the mining industry.¹ Accompanying George were his younger brother Lionel, an officer on leave from Canadian Pacific Steamships, and Dr. August Sandberg, a metallurgist and geologist. The plan was to establish a base camp on Great Bear Lake and from there to conduct two field trips to the Coppermine area: a preliminary survey in late summer by way of canoe and a more extensive investigation early the following spring travelling overland by dogsled. Although the purpose was defined in strictly scientific terms, the expedition was ultimately shaped by the character and interests of its leader. As a consequence, the schedule of activities was directed by professional objectives, whereas rewards were measured in terms of spiritual experience rather than material gain. In the opinion of George Whalley, who first met Douglas while researching the biography of John Hornby, the adventurous mining engineer was “more interested in getting to the Arctic Ocean and seeing it, than in hope of gaining wealth from the results of prospecting.”² In this regard, Douglas’s journey might be described as a pilgrimage to the seas once plied by his maternal ancestor, Sir Edward Belcher, in his search for the lost Franklin expedition. In other respects, the trip took on characteristics of some present-day travellers, as Douglas attempted to follow in part the routes previously traversed by Samuel Hearne in 1771, Captain John Franklin in 1822, Dr. John Rae in 1851 and David Hanbury in 1902. Conscious of reliving history, he purposely sought out old campsites and landmarks recorded in earlier reports and on several occasions would compare his own impressions of landscape or river travel to those described by the explorers. Yet regardless of personal interests and ambitions, the official purpose for which the expedition received its funding was completed to the satisfaction of both the party and its benefactors.

The detailed narrative published two years after his return, *Lands Forlorn: A Story of an Expedition to Hearne’s Coppermine River*, provides an exceptional insight into a very uncommon man.³ Reflecting unusual literary skills and historical knowledge, the account also points to an inner tension in the author’s character: an efficiency and self-discipline expected of a mining engineer in combination with a genuine empathy for the northern wilds. George Douglas was at home in the natural world, but his inspiration was philosophical rather than scientific. Whalley, who came to know him well in later years, described some of the inherent inconsistencies.

... his romanticism was of the purest, most innocent sort, lacking self-consciousness, with no trace of morbidity. His incorrigible generosity, his strong will, his infectious enjoyment of other people's idiosyncracies [sic], his inflexible because incorruptible personal integrity – all these things made him a strange if always admirable figure in a corrupt and positivist world.⁴

The apparent paradox in the objectives demanded by his profession and his love of the wilderness were easily compromised in the 1911 expedition. Later, the conflict would haunt the thoughtful mining engineer, whose favourite book was Thoreau's *On Walden Pond*. By nature, Douglas was energetic and conscientious, with a calm manner that tended to inspire confidence. Humble as well, he described himself as leader of the expedition "by chance more than by any other qualification."⁵ Although sometimes impatient and critical of ineptitude, he nevertheless displayed an unusual sensitivity and understanding of man and nature.

Douglas was atypical of most Canadians at the turn of the century. Much of this individuality can be traced to family background and boyhood experiences. He was a third-generation Canadian, born at Halifax in 1875. His father, a retired Army surgeon, was an avid canoeist and member of both the Toronto Canoe Club and the American Canoe Association (ACA). Dr. Douglas was also a restless man, moving his family from Nova Scotia to Quebec, then Montreal and eventually to Toronto. En route to the 1883 ACA regatta in the Kawarthas, he noticed the "for sale" sign on a farm located just north of Lakefield.⁶ On impulse, he purchased the Northcote estate on the shores of Lake Katchewanooka, where George and his younger brother spent many happy hours exploring the lake country. They were not "taught" or "taken" canoeing; it was simply a way of life. Added to the usual youth adventure stories were the tales their mother told, of Sir Edward Belcher, of Arctic exploration, of the dangers and exploits in a strange and alien land. Quite understandably, the sons equated romantic adventure with the Canadian Arctic. A further and by no means minor influence was his father's colourful personality and penchant for challenge and excitement. When the Northwest Rebellion broke out in 1885, Dr. Douglas volunteered his services and travelled west with Maj-Gen. Middleton. After a number of delays on the Saskatchewan River, the enterprising surgeon set off alone in a small folding canvas canoe. His account of this journey appeared in both *Field and Stream* and *Badminton Magazine*. A decade later, the same canoe would carry him across the English Channel from Dover to Calais.⁷ Unquestionably, the spirit of adventure was passed on from father to son. When his wife died in 1894, Dr. Douglas applied for a new commission in the British army to pay for his sons' education. The two boys accompanied their father to

England, and much to their distress, the farm was sold. In Britain, George Douglas entered into an apprenticeship which included three years at sea. After receiving his engineer's papers, he was offered employment in North America by an older cousin, the Canadian-born Dr. James Douglas, who had risen through the ranks of the Phelps Dodge Company to become a successful mining promoter and financier.⁸ Following assignments in Mexico and the United States, George Douglas returned to Lakefield for a visit in 1906 and was successful in buying back the family homestead. The summer of 1908 was the first of many spent at Northcote until his retirement there in the 1930s.⁹

* * *

His first trip to the Barrens evolved from a discussion with his cousin concerning the investigation of potential mineral development in northern Ontario. As an alternative, James offered to grubstake an exploratory study in the Coppermine region.¹⁰ Without hesitation, Douglas accepted and began to collect books and documents dealing with Arctic exploration. Included were reports by Samuel Hearne, Franklin, Richardson and John Rae. Of particular interest was David Hanbury's *Sport and Travel in the Northland of Canada*, which provided a detailed account of a 1902 canoe trip up the Coppermine and Kendall Rivers, overland and down to the mouth of the Dease River on Great Bear Lake. Using this trip report as his guide, Douglas planned the reverse route. He also obtained a sketch map from the Geological Survey, ostensibly the work of J.M. Bell and Charles Camsell in 1900. In the fall of 1910, Douglas sat down to work out a detailed plan.

Meticulous care was taken in provisioning the expedition. Most equipment and two canoes were purchased in the East, one larger canoe and food in Edmonton, and a York boat at Fort Simpson. On the advice of "seasoned travelers," he waited to buy toboggans, snowshoes and fur clothing at the northern trading posts, a move he regretted after discovering that superior quality and selection had been available in the South. Commiserating over the time wasted in acquiring these items, Douglas claimed "it was one of the many instances to show how unreliable the advice may be of men who have been a long time in that country, and their commonly curious failure to appreciate the importance of time!" He took great pride in his selection of boats—here the more romantic side of the competent organizer emerges. The two 18-foot canoes were hand built in Lakefield from specially selected wood "by men who took a keen personal interest in their work." One was christened *Polaris* after the North Star, the other *Procyon* after a star of the first magnitude in the constellation Canis Minor. The freight canoe purchased in Edmonton was built by the Peterborough Canoe Company of longitudinal basswood strips with close ribs and rigged with

a lug sail. This craft was named the *Aldebaran*, also a star of the first magnitude, the eye of Taurus. The York boat acquired to transport the heavy load of supplies up the Great Bear River was called the *Jupiter* after the largest planet in the solar system.*

* * *

On 11 May 1911, the Douglas party departed from Edmonton on the long journey down the Athabasca-Mackenzie waterway to Fort Norman. Travelling by canoe, river scow and Hudson's Bay Company steamer, they arrived at the northern trading post in early July. En route down the Mackenzie, Douglas met Robert Service, who was headed for the Yukon, and the American scientists Radford and Street—who were brutally murdered that same summer by a group of Eskimos.¹¹ Although few crossed paths in the interior, there were a surprising number of travellers in the Canadian Northwest and chance acquaintances were commonplace. At Fort Norman, Douglas met Cosmo Melvill and John Hornby, two Englishmen who had travelled for two years in the Barrens from a base camp on Great Bear Lake. Melvill continued southward, but Hornby, on hearing the party's plans, decided impulsively to return to the old winter camp, purportedly to aid a young Oblate priest in establishing a mission among the Coppermine Eskimos.

This accidental meeting between Hornby and Douglas set the wheels of fate in motion; intermittent contact over the next year led to a continuing association through correspondence and occasional visits. It was a curious relationship for two men so diametrically different. In contrast to Douglas's meticulous organization and calm, self-assured manner, Hornby might be described as erratic, careless, ill-prepared and prone to faulty judgement, which frequently led to near disasters. His fascination for the Barrens drew him back time and again until a legend grew around the exploits of the quixotic Englishman. Edmonton was a mecca for the departing and returning adventurers of the Northwest, and the local newspaper kept its readers informed of the latest escapades of the "Northmen."¹² Not surprisingly, Hornby became a virtual hero because of his tales of close encounters with death, and it was not until his tragic demise with two companions in 1927 that his associates dared put forward any public criticism. Years later, George Whalley would approach Douglas as Hornby's closest "friend" in an effort to solve the mystery of this curious individual. Ironically, the publication of *The Legend of John Hornby* in 1962 brought the story of George Douglas to the attention of a new generation, but this time more

* According to Mrs. Douglas, his interest in astronomy was a consequence of his three years spent at sea.

as "Hornby's friend" than in recognition of his own achievements. In 1911, however, it was the lure of the Coppermine that forged a common bond between these two men of such diverse character.

After experiencing some difficulty in hiring natives to assist in tracking operations up the Great Bear River, the Douglas party eventually set out on July 8, leaving behind the *Procyon* to be used if return via the Porcupine and Yukon Rivers became necessary. Ice on the riverbanks slowed their progress, but they managed to reach the ruins of Fort Franklin in six days. After a brief word with Hornby and Father Rouvière, who arrived the next morning, the two brothers and Sandberg continued on across the wide expanse of Great Bear Lake. Plagued by rain and fog, they finally reached the site of old Fort Confidence on Dease Bay and proceeded up the river by the same name until halted by rapids. They arrived at the proposed location of their base camp on July 24, 44 days after leaving Edmonton.

Although offered the use of lodgings built by Joe Hodgson, a former Hudson's Bay Company factor, Douglas quickly rejected the idea, describing the structure as "a rude, poorly built log shack." An adjacent site was chosen for their cabin, tents erected, the *Jupiter* unloaded and everything stowed before nightfall. According to plan, Lionel would remain behind to build their winter quarters while George Douglas and "the Doctor" made a preliminary journey to the Coppermine. With provisions to last 50 days, the two departed in the *Polaris* on July 28, only four days after their arrival at Hodgson's Point.

Progress up the Dease River was slow and tedious as low water necessitated wading the canoe through seemingly endless stretches of shallow rapids. Even more time was wasted in an attempt to identify Hanbury's "Sandy Creek," a tributary of the Dease. After two days of frustrating searching, they proceeded up the shallow stream, wading and portaging until reaching the divide. The overland trek to the Dismal Lakes was 6½ miles long and took over two days as they covered the ground seven times, taking three loads each and both carrying the canoe. Here they met their first Eskimo, who fled in apparent fright after a short meeting. Arrival at Teshierpi Lake was celebrated by "an extra good feed" supplemented by "desiccated raspberries as a special treat." The raspberries were an unexpected disappointment, but the juice was mixed with a little brandy brought along "for emergencies" and the concoction light-heartedly christened "Teshierpi Toddy."

After crossing the Dismal Lakes and heading down the Kendall River, the two men began to tire under "the constant strain of steering down the boulder-strewn rapids." In the last set before reaching the Coppermine, they struck a large rock which holed the canoe and were able to reach the shore only minutes before it sank. A day was spent resting, hunting, prospecting and repairing the *Polaris*

before resuming their journey downriver. Camping at a point where the river cut through the mountains, Sandberg began his geological reconnaissance while Douglas set off in search of caribou. Over a week was spent in the general area, and although Douglas would have liked to have continued to the ocean, "the return would have taken more time than we could afford." The ascent back up the Kendall was nerve-wracking. Douglas compared his state of mind to similar feelings expressed by Hanbury when he had passed that way nine years earlier:

. . . ascent of a dangerous river, or rather I should say a river where continued caution is absolutely necessary to prevent an accident, is apt to get on the nerves. Every day the attention is strained and every night you are obliged to camp close to the thunder and swish of the rough, heavy, and rapid water which you know you will have to tackle the following morning.¹³

When Douglas and Sandberg reached the lake plateau, their mood changed abruptly. They believed their worst trials were over; it was now downhill. The surroundings also had undergone a dramatic transformation. Ten days ago, it had been summer; now the hills bore their attire of yellow willows and birches, accented by brilliant red mosses. Mauve and cerise sedges lined the water's edge. The weather, previously sunny, soon turned "thick and stormy" with some frost and snow encountered on the divide. The first portion of the descent was tedious, the cold adding greatly to the discomfort of wet clothing as they waded the canoe down the shallows of Sandy Creek. By the time they reached the Dease River, autumn had disappeared. The trees were leafless and the sedges "withered to a dark yellow;" nights grew darker and the aurora borealis was sighted for the first time. At the last lunch stop before reaching the base camp, they tidied up the *Polaris* and gave their utensils an extra scouring, "following the time-honoured fashion of the sea to make port with everything ship shape." On September 11, the two reached Hodgson's Point, 45 days after their departure and five days earlier than estimated.

A welcome surprise greeted them. In a month and a half, Lionel had created a masterpiece out of scrub spruce. The 14' by 16' log cabin, with corners neatly squared, was chinked with moss and caribou hair, mudded inside and out, and roofed with small spruce poles, more caribou hair, dry sand and a top covering of waterproof canvas. In keeping with northern tradition, a pair of antlers adorned the peak. A large fireplace with a quartzite mantle stood in one corner. Two windows brought from Fort Simpson brightened the interior. The sand floor was covered with wooden blocks and the walls were papered with pages from old magazines. Food and utensils were neatly stowed on open shelves, and the four folding chairs obtained from the Hudson's Bay Company steamer added a touch of modernity to the otherwise rustic hand-built furniture. With only

minor assistance from a local native, Lionel had erected a structure aesthetically perfect by northern standards and designed for optimum comfort and utility. In contrast, the cabin built by Hornby for Father Rouvière was described by Douglas as simply “a shack.”

For the next six months the expedition was on hold. The Bear Lake Indians visited frequently but were not encouraged to linger. According to Douglas, when they “found we didn’t want anything and that there was very little to be got out of us, they soon went their own ways.” Unlike earlier travellers, Douglas preferred to rely on his own initiative and firmly rejected the use of Indian guides. This decision was likely influenced by problems incurred by Hanbury and Hearne, and by awareness of the longstanding friction between Indian and Eskimo. His initial prejudice against the Natives was unquestionably adopted from his readings, as stated in the first pages of *Lands Forlorn*:

The Indians of the Mackenzie Valley have earned a most unenviable character, for thorough unreliability and inefficiency. All travellers who have accomplished anything agree in describing them as worthless, shiftless, careless, unreliable, and generally contemptible.¹⁴

Experience softened his attitude somewhat. After initial contact with the Fort Norman Indians, he admitted that “the opinion we had formed of the Northern Indians generally, was certainly improved by our small experience with these men.” Yet, apart from assistance needed in tracking the York boat up the Great Bear River, Douglas stubbornly refused native help and discouraged close relations. During later trips north, according to his widow, he came to know and appreciate Indian philosophy through closer contact with individuals.

During the winter months, there was sporadic interaction with Hornby and Father Rouvière, although the two parties remained quite independent of each other. They did join forces for a short excursion in October, but apart from one brief trip to Hornby’s cabin located about six miles away, the visiting was very one-sided, with the Englishman and the priest travelling to Hodgson’s Point. Douglas was noticeably non-committal in his opinion of Hornby, whereas he described Rouvière as having “added greatly to the pleasure of our life in winter quarters.”

Unlike Hornby, the Douglas party came prepared for all events and took extra pains to ensure mental and physical well-being.

We had good grub and good equipment, our camps were always comfortable, and we took trouble preparing our meals. We had learned the necessity of taking good care of our bodies; they were mere machines for the conversion of heat into energy and required the careful attention necessary for every high class machine.¹⁵

Although well supplied with adequate food to sustain them over the winter, they were successful in hunting both ptarmigan and caribou to provide fresh meat throughout the winter months. By contrast, Hornby and Rouvière were forced to rely on dried meat obtained from the Indians. In addition to concern for their physical health, special efforts were made to ensure optimum emotional stability. Douglas believed that wintering-over in the Barrens should not be treated as a casual experience, that "protracted residence in that country lowers standards of reliability and efficiency, and warps accuracy of judgement." Elaborate plans were set out to provide a rigid routine that incorporated change to avoid monotony, equal sharing to defer personal conflicts, periods of rest to balance work sessions and reading times interspersed with cards and chess. Throughout the winter, intellectual stimulus was furnished by reading "good novels" and Michelet's *History of France*, borrowed from the Hudson's Bay Company factor at Fort Simpson.

A degree of privacy was provided by a strict division of labour rotated on a weekly basis. During the day, household chores, hunting and the collection of firewood were carried out on individual assignment, thereby limiting group gatherings to the early morning and evening. Pride in personal achievement was derived from preparation of an exceptional meal, a well-stacked wood pile or a successful hunt, and collective satisfaction grew from awareness that the winter plan was succeeding. There were no apparent personality conflicts and no unforeseen circumstances to threaten their physical well-being. Anticipation of change was the key weapon against boredom. Even the menu reflected this strategy. Aside from variation dependent on the availability of game, Sundays offered breakfast coffee instead of tea, hominy instead of oatmeal. For supper, maple syrup was added to the usual bannock. Yet just as change was instituted to relieve tedium, there was also an attempt to duplicate the comforts of home: a table made from old flooring obtained in Fort Simpson was painted yellow and adorned with a tablecloth of blue serge.

Preparedness also played a major part in the strategy. Undoubtedly influenced by accounts of near starvation due to the absence of fish or game, Douglas had ensured that food supplies were adequate for the total time of the expedition. He also adhered to this principle on his two trips to the Coppermine, for he believed hunting would unnecessarily take time away from geological explorations. Similarly, their equipment was of the highest quality and included many items designed to counter the detrimental effects of harsh climate and isolation. For example, the photographic supplies included premium cameras, ample film and developing materials lest delay and adverse weather conditions deteriorate the exposed film. This meticulous attention to detail and organization was quite alien to free-spirited adventurers like John Hornby, but for the Douglas party it

assured a productive and enjoyable experience, free from undue discomfort or mishap. Critics might argue that George Douglas had merely transplanted southern institutions into the North and in doing so, destroyed the challenge; admirers would simply point to Hornby, who boasted of living “with the savages, leading a wild and natural life”¹⁶—and smile. Although seemingly over-prepared and over-organized, the results were an unqualified success, as the long winter months passed quickly with no hint of tension or hardship.

For the spring journey to the Coppermine, Douglas originally hoped to manhaul the toboggans, a plan that was quickly abandoned after a few short trials. Since Hornby was familiar with the use of dogs and particularly “anxious to make the trip to the coast,” it was agreed he should join them—with a rather curious provision. Despite Douglas’s resolve to travel without native assistance, Hornby was allowed to take along a young Indian boy as a “travelling companion,” thus enabling the Englishman to “follow his own devices” once they reached the Coppermine. If it had not been for Hornby’s expertise in dog-handling, it appears doubtful he would have been invited. On April 30, the party set out with two toboggans, each drawn by three dogs. The overland trek followed a more direct route to the Coppermine but was undertaken in relays in order to transport the copious supply of food and equipment to the base camp. In mid-May, the snow disappeared just as the last toboggan load arrived at the camp. From then on, the dogs and the men carried the packs.

At Bloody Falls, the party encountered the first sizable group of Eskimos, a friendly lot who created a very favourable impression. Douglas wrote with apparent surprise that “it was a delight to meet these vivacious, well-bred people after the sulky Indians; their manners indeed were just as good and similar to our own.” In a later encounter, he again remarked on their “well-bred ways usual with people of culture.” This first-hand experience with the Coppermine natives caused him to question the advisability of white contact and attempts to convert them.

Perhaps it may be a pity that the latter (the Eskimo) cannot be left strictly alone; competent observers declare civilization means nothing but inevitable ruin and misery for them.¹⁷

In view of his expressed admiration for Father Rouvière and the work of the Oblates in general, this suggestion may appear somewhat contradictory. Yet Douglas’s criticism of native behaviour, unacceptable by his standards, was not derived from a general racial bias. He believed that the unpleasant aspects of their conduct were directly attributable to contact with white man’s civilization.

More from anticipation than actual accomplishment, the climax of the expedition was their arrival on the Arctic coast. Only the Douglas brothers hiked the nine miles from Bloody Falls. The others remained behind: the geologist to

take notes and Hornby in hopes of further encounters with the Eskimos. But to the Douglas brothers, it was an occasion to be celebrated as they unfurled their flags and “took pictures of each other proudly standing on the ice of the Arctic Ocean.” Aside from achieving the northern limit of their travels, there must have been a deep personal satisfaction to have reached the Arctic waters once sailed by their great-grandfather, Admiral Belcher. The rest of the trip would be “a retreat ever southward.”

The party journeyed back quite leisurely to allow for more geological note-taking. By June 18, they finally reached Lake Rouvière, where the Oblate priest was attempting to establish an Eskimo mission. Here the Douglas brothers separated from the rest, preferring to travel by Hornby’s leaky canoe which had been stored there the previous winter. In their estimation, paddling was “a perfect joy” compared to hauling toboggans or packing dogs. This last segment of the voyage was described in nostalgic terms as they passed familiar landmarks and old campsites for the last time. The log cabin which they had left in a field of snow now appeared strange and unfamiliar surrounded by greenery and wild flowers. But there was little time for relaxation if they were to make contact with the southbound steamer. Immediately, they began preparing for their departure on June 26, less than a week after returning from the Coppermine.

Significantly, relatively few pages are devoted to the homeward trek. The excitement was over and return to civilization held no great attraction. There is a certain flatness in the balance of the narrative. Ice jams, swarms of mosquitoes and grey skies did not enhance the long journey around Great Bear Lake. Words such as “disagreeable,” “bleak,” “desolate” and “dismal” were used with unusual frequency, and the lack of an expected welcome at Fort Norman did little to improve the men’s spirits. Reflecting a note of cynicism, this disappointing event was attributed to the fact they had “failed to conform to the convention requiring that the explorer should come to the first post ragged and half-starved, eating his moccasins and mits [sic].” Douglas became increasingly critical and impatient of delays as they travelled south. Understandably, the record of the last day on the Athabasca River focused more on recollections than on current happenings.

My last memories are pleasant ones only: of quiet waters and comfortable camps, of fine nights and fine days, of short spells of work, of long spells of rest; sitting at ease in the scow, lazily watching, through an atmosphere of uncomparable purity and ineffable calm, the naked trees reflected in the tranquil stream in all their beauty of line, and the faint silver threads of gossamer floating in the still air. Time itself had come to a standstill; such afternoons seemed as though they might last forever.¹⁸

His writing style, which had begun in a methodical and abrupt manner, underwent a gradual transformation, with the final chapters reflecting a somewhat idyllic romanticism derived from a profound personal experience.

Somewhat uncharacteristic for a man returning south after a year in the wilderness, Douglas initially claimed to have no great difficulty in adjusting to civilization. He simply took up life where he had left off. This reaction was no doubt facilitated by the fact that he was returning to Northcote rather than to an urban environment. But no such experience leaves one completely unaffected.

Some time passed before we began to feel in many subtle ways the results of a long absence. In regard to the great world, we were the same people who had left eighteen months before, but while we were relatively unaltered, our world had gone its appointed course, and unhastening, unceasing the appointed changes had been wrought. It was ground irrevocably lost; no skill, nor energy, nor address could recover it. The times had changed, the change in ourselves had no reference to them but made conformity to established usages more difficult.¹⁹

The world had not waited for their return, a fact accepted with some regret. Douglas was also aware that his reluctance to conform to conventional practices had increased with the Coppermine experience. Non-conformity may be defined as eccentricity, a characteristic often ascribed to individualists and certainly a common trait among northern travellers of the period.

In the tradition of previous explorers and adventurers, Douglas sat down on his return with pen in hand to narrate the details of the expedition. Aside from bringing the far North closer to the armchair adventurers in the South, *Lands Forlorn* remains an invaluable source of knowledge and inspiration for those who follow his path. And like other northern travellers, Douglas could find no words of his own to conclude the book. Instead, he quoted a poem to explain how the three men had departed, leaving behind “as hostage of each heart all that was most our own.” George Douglas left part of himself in the Coppermine and took back in return only memories.

* * *

When Douglas left Great Bear Lake in 1912, he fully intended to return the next summer. His cousin, though pleased with the results of the investigation, had serious reservations. Predicting that “the region may become one of the great copper producers of the world,” and that commercial production was now more feasible due to the party’s discovery of lignite deposits on Great Bear Lake, the mining promoter and financier warned that accessibility was a major problem that could only be resolved by building a railroad either from the south or easterly to Hudson Bay.²⁰ Whether or not James Douglas would have agreed to further

study became irrelevant; by the summer of 1914, war intervened. To his great disappointment, George Douglas was rejected by both the Royal Flying Corps and Navy because of deafness, an affliction since childbirth. In 1916, he was back working in Mexico and a year later married. By the end of the war, a change in circumstances prevented any immediate return to the Coppermine. Apart from the sudden death of his cousin, who had taken such an interest in his aspirations, there was considerable confusion arising from attempts by the Canadian government to restrict foreign oil and mineral exploration in the Northwest Territories.²¹ Douglas continued working on various assignments primarily in Mexico and Arizona, but now spending more and more time at Northcote.

In the summer of 1928, he returned once again to the Northwest Territories, this time to the southeastern shores of Great Slave Lake. The official purpose was to verify a government surveyor's report of possible copper deposits in the area. By now, other companies had joined in the search, and one Toronto-based company was now trenching* in the Coppermine Mountains.²² On this occasion, Douglas was sponsored by the United Verde Copper Company of Arizona.²³ While not explicitly stated, there also appeared to be a personal motive in the second trip. Not only did it coincide with John Hornby's disappearance, but it was conducted in an area that the unpredictable Englishman had cited in his last letter as an alternate destination.²⁴ Moreover, Douglas admitted to taking along extra food and equipment "in case we came across Hornby."²⁵ Not until his return did he hear of Hornby's death by starvation on the banks of the Thelon River.

Although the use of bush planes had ended the need for long arduous trips by canoe and dogsled, Douglas and his companion set out as before with two canoes and full rations to cover the entire journey. The larger freighter was not only equipped with a lug sail, but now sported a blunt end to carry a small outboard motor. The smaller butternut strip canoe with elm ribs was to be used over portages. In the tradition of the earlier expedition, both craft were named for stars: the *Mizar* and *Alcor* respectively. The 850-mile journey along the southeastern shores and up the rivers into the interior represented the first serious geological study of the area, but similarity to the first journey ended here. No copper of significance was found, and there was little evidence of the excitement he had experienced on the Coppermine expedition.

In a speech delivered on his return to the Canadian Mining and Metallurgical Association, Douglas was unusually cautious over the future of mining in the Great Slave Lake basin and warned that any notable growth in development would have to be preceded by construction of a railway from the Peace River

* "Trenching" involves excavation to determine the extent of mineral deposits.

Country to Hay River. Equally notable was his pessimistic concern for the natives. He repeated an earlier observation that northern natives having the least contact with white civilization were the happiest, best mannered and least offensive. Once more he suggested that the best recourse might be to exclude all white trappers and small traders from the area in order to save "the fur and the Indians it supports." But he now rejected the idea as impractical and concluded with the pessimistic prediction that "the fur trade is doomed, and most of the Indians with it." He saw no benefit for the Indians in developing water power, lumber, fishing or mineral resources and claimed that a great increase of government support for the northern natives was inevitable.²⁶

His reaction to the second trip was also quite different from 16 years earlier. With the exception of a few paragraphs on the history, topography and potential development of the area, the article entitled "A Summer Journey Along the Southeast Shores of Great Slave Lake" was little more than a detailed description of the trip preparation and equipment. There was no daily log or mention of the route followed. In fact, the format was virtually identical to the tripping manuals of the period.* Concern was for safety and optimum efficiency as opposed to the previous focus on travel and adventure. In addition to advancing age, Hornby's death may have been a contributing factor to an apparent change in attitude. Douglas spoke of "personnel" being of "prime importance in an expedition planned to explore a little-known country." Although his reference was directed toward geologists, the wider implications of his philosophical theorizing were unmistakable:

Knowledge, the mere acquisition of basic facts or accepted hypotheses, may be acquired in comparatively few years; but wisdom, as one of the great Victorians said, comes slowly So by the time a geologist has acquired maturity of judgment he may be incapable of meeting the physical stress imposed on the members of a small expedition to a rough and remote country The powers of youth and the wisdom of age are rarely combined in an individual.²⁷

If *Lands Forlorn* was written for the purpose of sharing a memorable experience, "A Summer Journey" was designed more as a lesson.

Douglas returned to the Northwest Territories on four more occasions and each time became more disconcerted. Now semi-retired, he went to Great Bear Lake as a consultant in the winter of 1932, and again the following spring when

* See B.W. Hodgins, "The Written Word on Canoeing and Canoe Tripping Before 1960," in *Nastawgan: The Canadian North by Canoe & Snowshoe*, ed. Bruce W. Hodgins and Margaret Hobbs (Weston: Betelgeuse, 1985). The nature of Douglas's article was similar in both style and content to the tripping manuals of the period.

he witnessed the frantic activity involved in the start-up of the Eldorado Mine. In 1935 and 1938, he returned to Great Slave Lake on further prospecting assignments. His last trip coincided with the opening of the Consolidated Mining and Smelting operation at Yellowknife, and according to an acquaintance, he was deeply affected by "the high pressure development he at last saw, the feverish and disorderly scramble for mineral wealth, the untidy spawning of the town of Yellowknife." As for the new northerners, "Why," he exclaimed, "these men aren't even polite to the Indians!"²⁸ Depressed over the damage wrought by his own profession, George Douglas no longer had any desire to return. The romantic vision of his northern wilderness was now tarnished by the realities of southern progress and development.

By the time World War II broke out, Douglas had permanently retired to Northcote, where he led a relatively quiet life away from the frantic pace and modern conveniences of urban society. To many he appeared somewhat eccentric as he paddled the nearby lakes and rivers alone or in the company of his wife, retracing the favourite haunts of his childhood. An interest in history continued to occupy much of his thought, as evidenced in a rather prolific daily correspondence. Although lengthy conversation had become tedious due to increasing deafness, he spent many hours with George Whalley in an attempt to untangle the mysteries of the errant John Hornby. Even after 50 years, Douglas's feelings for the Englishman reflected a curious mixture of amusement, impatience, affection and scorn.²⁹ Whether by fate or good fortune, *The Legend of John Hornby* appeared in print barely a year before Douglas passed away at the age of 88. He was content in the knowledge that the true story of Hornby's irresponsibility had been told, alerting the public to the fact that wilderness travel required caution, preparedness and expertise.

* * *

The broad spectrum of northern adventurers in the early twentieth century suggests a generation seeking both material and spiritual answers. For the Canadian born, wilderness travel was often a search for national identity, an attempt to relate to earlier explorations and to the northern frontier psychology inherent in the growth of the new Dominion. For the American, it was more a personal challenge, a test of character and physical endurance conducted in the name of science or sport. To the Englishman, adventure in far-off lands was a tradition. Apart from intense pride in the British heritage of exploration, vestiges of the imperial vision continued to lure sons of the upper class to former colonies throughout the Empire, to India, Africa, Southeast Asia and Canada. The challenge was frequently inspired by the bedtime stories of their youth, or in some cases simply as a means of escape from an increasingly urbanized society.

By contrast, most Canadians were in the North by reason of their occupation: missionaries, fur traders, Mounted Police and members of the Geological Survey. With the arrival of bush planes in the North, a new breed was added: the geologists hired by private exploration companies. Much later, northern travellers of a different sort appeared: the short-term visitors who chose to follow the paths of earlier explorers and wanderers. As a mining engineer inspired by his northern heritage, George Douglas was a native Canadian with a foot in both past and future worlds.

For early twentieth-century adventurers, a journey into the Barren Lands demanded both physical strength and a special wisdom. Some succeeded where others failed, and even failures gained recognition for their heroic attempts. Yet only a very few of those "Northmen" are widely remembered today. Their goals and achievements had more of a personal nature compared to the great explorers of the past who sought the Northwest Passage to Cathay or the overland route to the Pacific. The new travellers ventured into unknown territory for individual satisfaction rather than for national purpose. Their major public contribution was in the form of books and articles that reinforced the mystical lure of the far North, a lure which remains today, drawing canoeists and back-packers into remote regions. But times have changed. Over the years, travels that once seemed nearly impossible to readers of their chronicles have been re-enacted by countless Canadians motivated by both professional and personal interests.* Moreover, the North has moved closer to the South with the aid of modern transportation and communications, and the art of canoe-tripping has undergone change with the introduction of new equipment and food processing. The Northmen now belong to history, and as a consequence, their writings have become an invaluable resource, providing insight into the changing character of northern adventures as an integral part of our Canadian heritage.

If Warburton Pike was the first of a new breed of travellers in the Barrens,[†] then Douglas represents a further transitional phase linking the seekers of challenge and excitement to the twentieth-century professionals. In contrast to the somewhat egocentric adventurers of the late 1800s, Douglas was a selfless man who sought neither fame nor fortune. He did not revel in overcoming

* The dichotomy between personal and professional objectives is still prevalent today as many young people join scientific field parties more as a means of working in the wilderness than as agents of its destruction. As long as resource exploitation and northern development offer employment in remote regions of the Canadian North, there will be men and women who will try to satisfy personal objectives through occupational opportunities.

[†] See Margaret Hobbs, "Purposeful Wanderers: Late Nineteenth Century Travellers to the Barren Lands," in *Nastawgan*.

hardship as much as he sought to prevent it. His desire for independence, as reflected in his refusal to rely on natives for food or guiding, also set him apart from his contemporaries and predecessors. In the tradition of the Tyrrell brothers and other Canadians, Douglas was able to satisfy his longing for wilderness travel through his vocation. Yet even here there is a subtle difference: financial support came not from government or institutions, but from private industry and, perhaps more significantly, from American capital.

George Douglas achieved more than a personal ambition in his journey to the mouth of the Coppermine. His geological studies of the ore-bearing mountains promised new areas of opportunity to the geologists and mining promoters. In a sense, he was the forerunner of the modern prospector. Building upon the century-old reports of Samuel Hearne, he extended the limits of serious mineral exploration to the shores of the Arctic Ocean, to the mysterious land beyond, known formerly only to explorers, police, traders and natives. Yet despite the esteem earned in professional circles, his greatest satisfaction was derived from the personal experience of northern adventure. In some respects, Douglas was a contradiction, a paradox. Whereas success in his occupation was measured most often in material wealth, for this mining engineer it held little allure. He was described as a man who was at one with nature, at ease in the wilderness, yet his exploration achievements would speed the advancement of civilization even deeper into the far North.

Douglas left another legacy to northern travellers of future generations. His labour of love, *Lands Forlorn*, is now a collector's item sought by those with a special interest in turn-of-the-century canoe-tripping or the exploration of the Coppermine region. In the Canadian tradition, there will always be those who travel northward with canoes and packs to follow the paths of their forefathers. As so aptly described by Canadian historian A.R.M. Lower,

... only those who have had the experience can know what a sense of physical and spiritual excitement comes to one who turns his face away from men towards the unknown. In his small way he is doing what the great explorers have done before him, and his elation recaptures theirs.³⁰

Relatively few of us have had the opportunity to experience the exhilaration of reliving our history. George Douglas was one Canadian who truly loved and lived his northern heritage, at a time of marked transition for the nation's perception of the North.

Notes

¹ Unless otherwise noted, biographical details were obtained from Mrs. Kay Douglas, widow of George and still residing in Lakefield, Ontario.

² George Whalley, *The Legend of John Hornby* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1962), p. 76.

³ Unless otherwise noted, short quotes, details of preparation and description of the trip itself were taken from George M. Douglas, *Lands Forlorn: The Story of an Expedition to Hearne's Coppermine River* (New York: 1914).

⁴ Whalley, p. 76.

⁵ Douglas, *Lands Forlorn*, p. 7.

⁶ Trent University Archives, Edward Guillet Papers, B-74-00311 File 1, "Memories of George Douglas," 17 August 1959. Also see correspondence from Douglas to Edward Guillet, 19 April 1953.

⁷ Ibid., letter from Douglas to Guillet, 9 May 1944.

⁸ Wesley Stout, "Want to Buy a Ghost Town," *The Saturday Evening Post*, 26 May 1951, pp. 147-148.

⁹ Guillet Papers, "Memories of George Douglas."

¹⁰ Whalley, p. 52.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 50.

¹² Frederick B. Watt, *Great Bear: A Journey Remembered* (Yellowknife: 1980), p. 3.

¹³ Douglas, *Lands Forlorn*, p. 126.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 93.

¹⁶ Whalley, p. 173.

¹⁷ Douglas, *Lands Forlorn*, p. 231.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 269.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 270.

²⁰ Douglas, *Lands Forlorn*, p. iv.

²¹ D.H. Breen, "Anglo-American Rivalry and the Evolution of Canadian Petroleum Policy to 1930," *Canadian Historical Review*, LXII:3 (September 1981), pp. 290-301.

²² Richard Finnie, *Canada Moves North* (Toronto: 1948), p. 116.

²³ George Douglas, "A Summer Journey Along the Southeast Shores of Great Slave Lake," *Canadian Mining and Metallurgical Bulletin* (February 1929), p. 347.

²⁴ As quoted in Whalley, pp. 259 and 263.

²⁵ Douglas, "A Summer Journey," p. 349.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 349-360.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 347.

²⁸ Finnie, p. 117.

²⁹ Whalley, p. 3.

³⁰ A.R.M. Lower, *Unconventional Voyages* (Toronto: 1953), p. 24.

9

Northern Nationalists: Visions of “A New North,” 1940-1950

First published in *For Purposes of Dominion: Essays in Honour of Morris Zaslow*, eds. Kenneth S. Coates and William R. Morrison (Toronto: Captus University Publications, 1989), 47-70.

Circumstances arising out of World War II greatly increased the geopolitical significance of Canada's sparsely populated north, which in turn created both a sense of optimism about the feasibility of northern development and a heightened awareness of possible American encroachment on economic and territorial sovereignty. At the same time, however, the extensive military activities in the Yukon and Mackenzie District exposed the lack of adequate health, social welfare and educational services available to the indigenous population. Together, these factors gave rise to a convincing argument that new policies must replace the government's somewhat laissez-faire approach of the previous decade. The pressure exerted to bring about that change can be traced to the efforts of certain concerned individuals, within or closely connected to government circles.¹

The would-be architects of a “new north” included such men as Raleigh Parkin, Hugh Keenleyside, the Rt. Hon. Malcolm MacDonald, Trevor Lloyd, Brooke Claxton, A.D.P. Heeney, Major-General W.W. Foster and numerous others less directly involved. Although a number were involved in the founding of the Arctic Institute of North America, there was no formal organized group, movement or association. These “arcticians,” as defined by John Holmes,² came from different walks of life: an insurance executive, a geographer, a high-ranking civil servant, an overseas veteran of two world wars, a diplomat and a lawyer cum politician. Most would have called themselves internationalists because of their commitment to cooperation among all nations towards world peace, but they could also be described as “northern nationalists” for their conviction that the future of Canada lay in the responsible development of the northern frontier and

for their criticism of any subordination to a greater power that might result in loss of economic or political autonomy. These men succeeded in arousing a new awareness and interest in the far north for a variety of reasons: their vision and concern, their dedication to progressive reform, their ability to exert influence in high places, and the fact that they had a receptive audience in a more intellectually oriented government and socially conscious public.

The results of their efforts were far-reaching. Commenting on the changed character of government, political economist Kenneth J. Rea noted that the turning point came "in the 1940s when the domestic economy of the north was abruptly replaced by a degree of involvement that within a little more than a decade made 'government' the most important local industry of the area."³ For the most part, scholars have attributed this change to broader economic, social and political factors affecting Canada and the world at large, thus inadvertently downplaying the crucial role of certain individuals as promoters and architects of "a new north."

Since the time of Confederation, Canadian nationalists have championed the north, either in terms of potential resource development and future prosperity or as a means of establishing a unique identity in North America. Both served to encourage national unity and pride in the new Dominion. A more romantic concept of "north" emerged at the turn of the century as the wilderness appreciation movement in the United States began to spread its influence through literature and art. Eventually, a Canadian version began to take form, tying the reverence for nature and wilderness to the northern regions by virtue of the nation's geography. This ideal was further enhanced by an increasing wilderness focus in Canadian writing and the northern landscapes by the Group of Seven.⁴ Inevitably, conflicting images of "north" began to take form in the Canadian psyche,⁵ as nationalist rhetoric increasingly gave promise to a vaguely defined "true north, strong and free." To many Canadians, however, the northern territories were merely distant lands of snow and ice, sparsely inhabited by a race of uncivilized nomads and of little value to the settlement-conscious [immigrants] from Britain and Europe. To some, the north was a place of the imagination, symbolizing freedom, excitement and challenge.

Events surrounding the Klondike gold rush and the dispute over the Alaska boundary again raised fears of America's "manifest destiny" and exposed the insurmountable problems of protecting sovereign authority in a remote and sparsely populated land. Thus, in the first quarter of the 20th century, government interest in the north was primarily in reaction to potential challenges to Canadian jurisdiction, whether from whalers, explorers or mining speculators. In most cases, the perceived threats came from Americans. The traditional response was to give a semblance of quasi-occupation by collecting customs

duties, instituting more police patrols and building more posts.⁶ The discovery of oil at Norman Wells in 1920 was considered to have more serious implications requiring administrative and constitutional changes. As a result, the Northwest Territories and Yukon Branch was created in 1921 under the Department of the Interior, and the first government offices in the Northwest Territories (NWT) were constructed at Fort Smith. That same year, reports of increased American whaling activity prompted the setting up of additional police posts in the Arctic, where, according to an official report, "there was grave danger of our sovereign rights being questioned by foreign powers."⁷ Similarly, rumours that the Norwegian government might lay claim to the arctic islands discovered by Otto Sverdrup resulted in the establishment of a Northern Advisory Board in 1925 to deal with "any sovereignty question."

During the depression years, there were no threats to sovereignty and even the discovery of gold at Yellowknife failed to attract the expected hordes of prospectors. As a result of cutbacks and budget restraints, the northern territories would be administered in the 1930s with minimal expenditure, manpower and responsibility. According to one observer, "activity" in the north was primarily "... limited to asserting authority; catching malefactors; trapping foxes; and saving souls. The first two have been regarded as sufficient functions of Government, the latter two have been handed over to private interests."⁸ Reflecting the relative insignificance of northern affairs during the economic crisis, the Northwest Territories and Yukon Branch was disbanded in 1930 and eventually re-emerged six years later as a minor bureau within the new Department of Mines and Resources.

* * *

When the United States officially entered the war following the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941, Canada immediately came under pressure to cooperate in numerous "joint" defence projects throughout the north. Some were ambitious undertakings, such as the Alaska Highway, the Canol pipeline and new airfields for the eastern and western staging routes. These in turn required an endless number of ancillary facilities: port facilities, telephone and telegraph lines, weather stations, barracks and improved transportation systems. All required manpower and money, for the most part supplied by the United States, with the result that by 1943, American military and civilian personnel were estimated to have outnumbered Canadians residing in the two territories.⁹ Yet prior to April of that year, Ottawa appeared relatively unconcerned about long-term implications. It was from outside the ranks of government that a groundswell of concern began to grow.

Of particular significance was the part played by one George Raleigh Parkin, son of the renowned educator and staunch imperialist, Sir George Parkin. In contemporary terms, Raleigh Parkin was extremely well connected in political, social and intellectual circles, partly through his Oxford acquaintances, his family ties (having for brothers-in-law Vincent Massey, W.L. Grant and J.M. Macdonnell) and his active participation in the "Montreal Group", an informal discussion club which included, among others, Brooke Claxton, Arnold Heeney, Frank R. Scott and Eugene Forsey. Although Parkin held a senior executive position with the Sun Life Assurance Company, his interests extended far beyond the confines of the business world. As a consequence, he was actively involved in numerous diverse organizations such as the Institute of Current World Affairs, the Canadian Institute of International Affairs and the Arctic Institute of North America. Although not a dedicated party supporter, he was also one of the key organizers for the Liberal Summer Conference of 1933.

Parkin's initial interest in the Arctic began when he was a trustee for the Institute of Current World Affairs, more commonly known as the Crane Foundation, whose aim was to send young men throughout the world to gain training and knowledge that would be valuable in furthering international relations. In Parkin's belief, an extensive study of the lesser-developed Canadian north might provide solutions to some of the more complex problems of southern societies. He also hoped that a man trained as an arctic generalist might eventually assume a position in the Canadian government to give "effective expression of his ideas and experience."¹⁰ As Doug Owram points out in *The Government Generation*, this concept of integrating more scholarly expertise into government was an objective shared by many of the intellectual elite during the inter-war years.¹¹

Parkin's search for a suitable candidate led to discussions with a number of individuals who were already involved in arctic research, men such as Diamond Jenness, Tom Manning and Maxwell Dunbar. In later years, Maxwell Dunbar described his impressions:

Raleigh Parkin's interests were both broad and deep; what interested him he explored deeply. He was extremely articulate and a marvellous conversationalist. He was a friend to all young people of promise within his field. It was his awareness of history and environment in the general sense, no doubt, that brought his attention to the North.¹²

Parkin was more than a mere dilettante; he was a behind-the-scenes activist with a single-minded determination to make things happen. Following in the tradition of his father, he was also a staunch Canadian nationalist.

Of singular importance was a meeting in November 1942 with Trevor Lloyd, a British-born Canadian geographer currently teaching at Dartmouth College.

Parkin was particularly interested in Lloyd's account of his experiences on the Mackenzie River that summer, especially his reports of large-scale American military activities, the apparent lack of Canadian involvement and the extensive research being carried out by the United States Army Air Forces (USAAF).¹³ Using his contacts and influence, Parkin arranged for Trevor Lloyd to meet with Malcolm MacDonald, the British High Commissioner, to discuss the nature and extent of the American operations.¹⁴

Unknown to Lloyd, MacDonald had more than a casual interest in the region as the chief diplomatic liaison in the transfer of the British atomic research team to a Montreal location and their efforts to obtain uranium ore from the mine on Great Bear Lake. As former Minister of Health in Churchill's coalition Cabinet, he appeared on the surface to have rather unusual credentials for the 1941 posting as U.K. High Commissioner to Canada. Of much greater relevancy was his potential influence as son of J. Ramsay MacDonald, Britain's first Labour prime minister and personal friend of Mackenzie King.¹⁵ He also had important contacts from his Oxford days, notably Norman Robertson, Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, and Arnold Heeney, Secretary to the Cabinet.¹⁶ His role as guardian of British interests was expected, but his unusual concern for Canadian interests was acquired through experience and friendships. Similarly, MacDonald's preoccupation with the Canadian north was related partly to its new military and economic significance but also to his own affinity for the wilderness, as reflected in his canoeing ventures in the Lake of the Woods region. These were all important factors in his ability to focus government attention on the north during the crisis years of the war.

After MacDonald first visited the key military establishments along the Alaska Highway and the Mackenzie Valley in the summer of 1942, he wrote a book about his experiences, ostensibly in hopes of alerting a broader audience to changing conditions in the Canadian northwest. Well known for his offhand candour, he made no attempt to couch his observations in the diplomatic niceties expected of a man in his position. In *Down North*, published in 1943, he described the oil development at Norman Wells as "despoiling aged nature ... and the methods employed are not leisurely," the Alaska territory as "Uncle Sam's great estate," the work of the bulldozers as "an outrageous piece of interference with Nature," and the spirit of the northern natives as destined to be "trampled underfoot by the march of civilization."¹⁷ Of his visit to Great Bear Lake, he wrote at length about his descent deep into "the dark galleries" of the Eldorado mine to watch the men feverishly at work. Unknown to his readers, the mine had just been reopened to fill orders for the United States Army's atomic research program.¹⁸ Noting that it took 1100 tons of ore to produce one gram, he wrote, "Thus the mountain labours to produce a mouse. But what a mouse!"¹⁹ Although

he referred only to radium because of the secrecy surrounding the research projects, the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki would eventually reveal the hidden meaning behind his words. In his personal diary, the single word "URANIUM" had been added in block letters below his notes of the mine visit.²⁰

Meanwhile, the American army continued to press for approval of new plans including greatly expanded oil exploration, the survey of a road along a northerly route to connect the Mackenzie and Yukon Rivers, additional air routes along the Mackenzie Valley and in the eastern Arctic, and the designation of Churchill as a prohibited military zone.²¹ Complaints from External Affairs concerning unauthorized American activities in the Mackenzie District slowed the pace somewhat and prompted Jack Hickerson of the State Department to suggest to General Guy Henry that some plans would have to be deferred since the United States did "not have blanket authority for construction of all war projects."²² Yet Ottawa appeared content to deal with each issue as it arose, until Malcolm MacDonald took independent action to arouse serious government concern.

By February 1943, Anglo-American relations were in a state of near crisis as a result of the United States Army's refusal to share scientific knowledge or release uranium supplies to the U.K. atomic research program as earlier promised. Two years' production of the Great Bear Lake mine had been guaranteed by contract to the Americans and unless the British team could gain access to even a small portion, its entire efforts would be stalemated. Despite urgent telegrams from Churchill to Roosevelt, Dr. Vannevar Bush, Director of the American project, steadfastly refused to cooperate on the grounds that the British aim was merely to exploit atomic energy for post-war commercial benefit. Frustrated, MacDonald requested approval from Clement Attlee, Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, for a second trip to the Mackenzie District.²³ As he explained to the British Ambassador in Washington, "immense developments by the Americans are taking place there, and I want to try to find out exactly what they are," and he noted that "they may be more important than anything else that is happening in Canada at the present time."²⁴

In mid-March of 1943, MacDonald and his aide left Ottawa and headed directly for Port Radium, stopping only for fuel or inclement weather. Simultaneously, Churchill dispatched his foreign secretary, Anthony Eden, to Washington for discussions on a variety of subjects, including post-war planning.²⁵ Directly upon his return to Ottawa, MacDonald stopped at the prime minister's residence to report on his unofficial visit.²⁶ King apparently agreed with the high commissioner's observations and concerns, for he invited him to relay his findings to the Cabinet War Committee two days later.

Accompanied by Eden, who had complied with MacDonald's earlier request to stop off in Ottawa en route back to London,²⁷ the maverick high

commissioner gave a verbal report to the 31 March meeting, claiming that American military activities in the northwest “were being planned and carried out with the view to the postwar situation,” and that the few Canadian officials in the area “were unable to keep control or even in touch with day to day developments.”²⁸ Six days later, he submitted a confidential written report, describing the military projects as “colossal” and their significance as “far reaching”, and warning of the inherent dangers:

Everywhere these Americans are talking eagerly about the development of the North-West, and their words are being translated into deeds. The American Army calls itself “The Army of Occupation”.... The inhabitants of those regions are beginning to say that it seems that the Americans are more awake to the importance of the Canadian North-West than are the Canadian authorities.²⁹

A copy was sent to Attlee with a note admitting his actions “may be impertinent, not to say unconstitutional,” but MacDonald maintained that he had “probably understated rather than overstated the case.”³⁰ In a brilliant move which essentially countered the U.S. Army’s suspicions of British post-war intentions, MacDonald successfully alerted Ottawa to the possibility that the Americans themselves had expectations of long-term benefits from their military activities. Armed with a tactical advantage, the next day MacDonald approached C.D. Howe, Minister of Munitions and Supply, with a request for 20 tons of uranium oxide which had been withheld on instructions by the U.S. Army. The British team finally received their much-needed uranium, but it was not until August and the signing of a formal agreement of cooperation in nuclear research by Roosevelt and Churchill that the tensions between the two Allies were finally resolved.³¹ There is no question, however, that MacDonald had successfully achieved his objectives.

* * *

After preliminary investigation into the accuracy of MacDonald’s allegations,³² Robertson and Heeney called for immediate action. In accordance with the recommendations set forth in the secret memo, the War Committee agreed on the need for a “Special Commissioner for Defence Projects in the Northwest.” By an order-in-council on 6 May, Brigadier-General W.W. Foster D.S.O. (subsequently promoted to Major-General) was appointed to the position, reporting directly to the War Committee through its secretary, Arnold Heeney. Apart from being the official representative of the government, Foster was also given an unofficial mandate to assess the situation and offer solutions to whatever problems might arise.³³ Historians have tended to describe Foster’s position as one of liaison or “watch dog,”³⁴ but examination of his records

indicates a more significant role. All records of Canadian and American activities, complaints and requests for permission were channelled through the Commissioner's office. Of particular importance were Foster's 41 formal recommendations to Cabinet, which proposed the takeover of U.S. operations, the protection of future oil rights, improved health and education services, new systems of transportation and communications, as well as the need for changes in the northern administration. Foster was also in close communication with officials from every conceivable federal department and those of the Yukon, Alberta and British Columbia governments.³⁵

The reporting structure provided expedient and influential channels of communication to members of External Affairs, Cabinet and the Prime Minister's Office, who were kept informed of the defence projects through detailed monthly reports. Conversely, the new significance of the northwest indirectly increased Foster's influence on political decisions, as reflected in the prompt response by the War Committee to his recommendations.³⁶ Foster's later reports and correspondence increasingly focused on post-war development plans as permanent settlements began to replace the military camps. In particular, he complained of frustration in dealing with the Yukon Council, which refused to take responsibility for future health and education services which had been provided temporarily by the USAAF.³⁷ In the process, he also alerted key officials and politicians to the dire need for administrative changes in northern affairs, just as MacDonald had aroused concern for sovereignty implications associated with the American military activities.

Described by Heeney as "a man who knew and loved the Canadian north,"³⁸ Foster was a veteran of both wars, a keen outdoorsman and a participant in the first successful ascent of Mt. Logan in 1925.³⁹ As commissioner, he was concerned with development, but his private image of the "north" reflected a strong identity with the wilderness. This duality was expressed in a speech to the Ottawa Branch of the Canadian Club in January 1945, just prior to his retirement. Claiming that Canada would be "assured of the development of its existing unique political and geographical position," Foster concluded his remarks by quoting lines from Robert Service's "The Land of Beyond" that he perceived as having "a far wider application today than when they were written."

Thank God there is always a land of beyond,
For those who are true to the trail,
A vision to seek, a beckoning peak,
A freedom that never will fail.⁴⁰

Conflicting perceptions of the north—a place of wilderness and a land of future settlement—were common among those who had lived or travelled extensively in the territories, and at times resulted in confusion and controversy

over the direction of new policies. Most Ottawa officials, however, were convinced that Canada was on the threshold of a new era which would see the north playing a major role in the nation's prosperity.

Meanwhile, the dominant presence of the American military was of more immediate concern and brought a member of External Affairs into the centre of the northern sovereignty debate. As a native of British Columbia, Assistant Under-Secretary Hugh Keenleyside was particularly sensitive to the increasing pro-American sentiment among western Canadians. Moreover, his membership on the Joint Economic Committees, the Permanent Joint Board on Defence and the Northwest Territories Council had made him acutely aware that the problem was much more complex than a mere visual presence. One of the more progressive and intellectually oriented members of External Affairs, Keenleyside was often more impulsive, innovative, radical and outspoken than his colleagues, perhaps as a result of his post-graduate education at Clark University in Massachusetts rather than the Oxford tradition of his peers.

In the spring of 1943, when details of the northern defence projects were still classified information, Keenleyside suggested that the Wartime Information Board (WIB) emphasize aspects of Canadian participation and potential plans for post-war development in its press releases.⁴¹ Responsible development, however, would require more than propaganda and promises. As the External Affairs representative on the Northwest Territories Council, Keenleyside was fully aware that there were no plans for changes in administration and policies to cope with the new circumstances and certainly no thought of long-range strategy. To gain more knowledge of the polar regions, he placed Trevor Lloyd on temporary assignment under the WIB to undertake studies of "various phases of northern development," including a comparative analysis of the Russian and Canadian Arctic.⁴²

During that spring and early summer, a number of articles appeared in the media on the subject of northern defence measures and future development. Most were extremely optimistic. Under the headlines "War Unlocks Our Last Frontier—Canada's Northern Opportunity," the *Financial Post* predicted the migration of thousands of young men to a new industrial north. The *Edmonton Bulletin* claimed that the opening of the northwest was "just as important to this age as was the opening of the prairie farmlands to the people forty years ago.... An empire is being born," and in London, *The Times* described the Alaska Highway as "a new Northwest Passage," comparable to the transcontinental railways of an earlier era.⁴³ On 1 July 1943, a series of articles appeared in *Maclean's*, this time emphasizing the significance of northern Canada in post-war civil aviation, but with a word of warning that there might be a potential conflict with American interests. Keenleyside was also successful in convincing the

Northwest Territories Council to hire a geographer, J. Lewis Robinson, to undertake more intensive studies of the Arctic.⁴⁴

Attempts to promote Canadian participation were complicated by competing American publicity, especially a press release issued by a public relations officer that described the Canadian northwest as "now a military area under the control of the United States Army and [that] will remain a restricted area until the war is over."⁴⁵ The American Secretary of State quickly forwarded apologies, and new regulations were laid down requiring approval from authorities of both countries before the publication of any article referring to defence projects in Canada.⁴⁶

The Canadian press proved more difficult to control in its criticism of American activities. On 26 September, Edmonton's *Sunday News* carried a news item purportedly written by an Ottawa reporter and entitled "The 49th State—Edmonton." Foster described the offending article in a letter to Heeney:

Amongst other extravagant statements is the one that the Mayor turned over to the U.S. the keys to the City, and that the Americans have new telephone, sewer, gas services and other privileges denied to Canadians; the article ended with the alleged quotation "This is the 49th State. God Bless America."⁴⁷

Other complications were arising. After a visit to the Alaska Highway in the summer of 1943, Keenleyside was much more pessimistic about its post-war potential and now warned that inaccurate publicity would raise false hopes.⁴⁸ He was quite correct. The optimistic reports of the preceding months had indeed created premature expectations. Not only were British Columbia and Alberta planning to promote land sales along the Alaska Highway, but the Joint Traffic Control Board reported that they had been besieged with tourist inquiries. To quell the unexpected enthusiasm, a press release was issued in late September, stating that the highway was "a vital military artery and cannot serve as a scenic route for tourists."⁴⁹

Concerned by both Keenleyside's and Foster's reports of the obvious lack of a Canadian presence, Arnold Heeney also headed to the northwest on an inspections tour. In a confidential report to the War Committee, he reported that American troops indeed dominated the area. He suggested that official Canadian signs and the flying of the Red Ensign might help to counter the predominance of the Stars and Stripes, but that the only truly effective means to diminish the visual effect of the American "quasi-occupation" was to station more Canadian troops throughout the northwest, a proposal that was hardly feasible in the fall of 1943.⁵⁰

The dilemma of how to deal with the problem came to a climax in the late fall when speculation over American expectations of post-war benefits were replaced by certainty. Following a special Senate inquiry headed by Harry S.

Truman into excessive military expenses on foreign soil, the State Department called a meeting early in December to discuss the possibility of re-negotiating the Canol agreement. Washington now wanted a guaranteed share of future commercial oil development at Norman Wells.⁵¹ As a member of the Canadian delegation, Keenleyside reported to Norman Robertson on further examples of American attempts to gain post-war advantages from the wartime agreements, stating that Ottawa must do "everything possible to reduce the number and relevant importance of defence facilities in Canada for which the United States taxpayer has to foot the bill." The confidential memo was forwarded on to the prime minister, where it found a sympathetic ear.⁵²

After discussing the Canol issue at the next War Committee meeting, King recorded in his diary that he, "as well as one or two others," believed

... that we ought to get the Americans out of the further developments there, and keep complete control in our own hands.... Also with Canada holding a position geographically advantageous in air routes as well as in resources there will be a demand on this country to make very great concessions to other nations. With the United States so powerful and her investments becoming greater in Canada we will have a great difficulty to hold our own against pressure from the United States.⁵³

Within weeks, King announced his government's intention to repay the United States for all permanent facilities constructed on Canadian soil.⁵⁴ Negotiations began in earnest until an agreement was reached in June 1944 that provided for the reimbursement. Both a final agreement and payment were concluded in 1946.⁵⁵ As a consequence, Canada emerged from the Second World War, free from any military strings attached to United States investment in the northern defence projects.

Not likely by coincidence, another wartime arrangement was also divested of any post-war implications in March 1944, when the prime minister announced the dissolution of the Joint Economic Committees.⁵⁶ The official explanation for this move claimed that other agencies had replaced the committees' functions, but circumstances leading up to the announcement suggest that other factors might have prompted the decision. Created as a means of facilitating economic cooperation following the Hyde Park Declaration, the function of the committees as announced in June 1941 was "to explore the possibility of a greater degree of economic cooperation between Canada and the United States."⁵⁷ Set up in the tradition of the International Joint Commission and the Permanent Joint Board on Defence, there were two separate committees, each with its own chairman, which would meet together for discussions and approvals of recommendations submitted by either country. From the outset, the joint

meetings were dominated by American proposals for post-war economic integration of the two countries, including freer trade, coordination of transportation and communications, and even equalization of monetary policies and social programs. Most proposals were deferred to further study in sub-committees by the Canadian chairman, W.A. Mackintosh.⁵⁸

Of particular significance was the committees' approval of the North Pacific Planning Project, a study into the "extension of the wartime collaboration into peacetime development of the vast region of British Columbia, Yukon Territory and Alaska."⁵⁹ It was not until months later, after the project had been presented at an Institute of Pacific Relations Conference held at Mont-Tremblant, Quebec,⁶⁰ and it was given full-page coverage in the *Sunday Oregonian*, complete with a map and titled "CANASKA—A Wide and Wealthy Northern Empire,"⁶¹ did news of such a study finally reach the Canadian prime minister. King reacted with intense distrust, claiming the project was part of a plan "by the Americans to control developments in the country after the war and bring Canada out of the orbit of the British Commonwealth of Nations into their own orbit."⁶² Reluctantly, and only after it was agreed that there would be a Canadian co-director of the study, did King finally give his consent.⁶³

Over the next year, there were massive studies completed by the Americans on such topics as a trans-Canada-Alaska railway, water resources with reference to the potential of the Columbia and Peace Rivers, coordination of automobile manufacturing, post-war use of the Alaska Highway, cooperation in the Pacific fisheries and integrated shipping services. Of perhaps greater significance was a report dated February 1944 on civil aviation, which advised the creation of a jointly owned American-Canadian-British airline to service the area, since competition would be uneconomical.⁶⁴ The existence of the Trans-Canada and Canadian Pacific Air Lines seemed to be irrelevant. Within weeks, King announced that the Joint Economic Committees would be dissolved. When approached for information to be included in a progress report, Charles Camsell, the Canadian chairman, notified his American counterpart that he would be proceeding with the planned field investigations for his minister, but as far as any "international collaboration" was concerned, the matter should be dealt with by the State Department and External Affairs.⁶⁵ A full account of the Canadian studies was eventually published in 1947, compiled from reports and surveys conducted by the numerous government agencies involved in northern affairs.⁶⁶

American interest in the Canadian north prompted concern over other related matters, especially scientific research. While on temporary assignment with the Wartime Information Board in 1943, Trevor Lloyd recommended the creation of an "Information Centre on Northern Canada" to compete with the United States Arctic Information Center and its "first class research facilities."⁶⁷ The

proposal was greeted with apparent enthusiasm by a number of government officials, including Arnold Heeney and Brooke Claxton. When parliamentary secretary before the war, Claxton claimed that he had also suggested the idea of a northern research centre but had received no support. "We have neglected it shamefully. Unless we use our opportunities now, the Americans who already have some people better informed than we have, will edge us out."⁶⁸ The project was shelved after deferral to the Department of Mines and Resources, but the concept became the basis for discussion among a number of concerned individuals that eventually led to the founding of the Arctic Institute of North America.

* * *

Government officials and politicians were not alone in their heightened awareness of the north's new significance. Pressure for new policies and more government involvement was mounting from the private sector, supported by those with first-hand knowledge, many of them professionals or scientists. On 18 March 1943, Raleigh Parkin submitted a proposal to the Research Committee of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs that they sponsor Trevor Lloyd to conduct an extensive study of the Canadian Arctic. Convinced that the region's increasing strategic significance would have a direct impact on future foreign relations, the Institute enthusiastically approved the project. Partially funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, the study took over three years to complete. It was detailed, comprehensive and controversial, with a major portion of the criticism directed at the northern administration.⁶⁹ Although never published, chapters were read and discussed by various members of the Institute and key government officials.⁷⁰

The influence of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs (CIIA) on government attitudes and policies is difficult to measure. Founded in 1928 as a non-partisan, independent organization dedicated to the advancement of knowledge and understanding in world affairs, the CIIA attracted an elite membership which included most of Canada's senior politicians and civil servants. Many members also accepted temporary wartime assignments in the civil service, thus indirectly increasing the Institute's influence on government policy.⁷¹ In addition, the elitist organization had made a conscious effort to broaden its membership and adopt a public education program as a means of being a more effective vehicle for stimulating popular interest in world affairs.⁷²

Because of the interest sparked by Lloyd's study, the Institute also sponsored numerous related lectures, study groups and publications. The author himself addressed branch meetings from coast to coast, at the same time taking the opportunity to reach the general public through press and radio interviews.

Others with diverse experience also lectured, men such as J. Tuzo Wilson, O.M. Solandt and Major-General Wm. Foster. Lloyd and others wrote articles for the Institute's *International Journal* and the "Behind the Headlines" series of booklets, as well as for numerous other scholarly and popular periodicals.⁷³ In doing so, they gained wide popular support for more active government involvement in northern affairs.

Quite by accident, Raleigh Parkin was also indirectly responsible for initiating yet another study of Canada's Arctic. Without his knowledge, Parkin's letter outlining the necessity for extensive arctic research was forwarded by the Rockefeller Foundation to the Canadian Social Science Research Council (CSSRC) for "opinion and advice."⁷⁴ Subsequently, the CSSRC was granted \$10,000 to sponsor a series of specific studies. Published under the title of the "Arctic Survey", these papers first appeared as articles in the *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* in 1945-1946, and were later incorporated into a book, *The New Northwest*, edited by C.A. Dawson. The studies covered a wide range of topics: agriculture, transportation, native settlement, education, health, mining, the fur trade and northern administration. The "Arctic Survey" not only served to heighten academic interest in northern studies but also added to the mounting criticism of the government's neglect of the Indians and Inuit. Reporting on native health in the Mackenzie Valley, for instance, Dr. G.J. Wherrett argued that "it was high time that the Department formulated a health policy founded on the needs of the people" rather than on budgetary limits.⁷⁵

The most persistent opposition to any change in government policy or administrative procedures appeared to come from the Deputy Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, Roy A. Gibson, who was also Director of the Northwest Territories and Yukon Bureau. In 1981, J. Lewis Robinson, who had worked for Gibson, recalled his impressions of the veteran bureaucrat.

Mr. Roy Gibson is a difficult man to assess. He was a dictator and autocrat. The North was his kingdom and he ruled it. Virtually everything went across his desk for perusal and signature.... I doubt that he really knew the significance of the war and external events upon Northern Canada.⁷⁶

Robinson did not doubt Gibson's sincerity but believed that his distrust of scientists was related to his fear that they might "upset his procedures and power." On one occasion, the deputy commissioner was overheard remarking, "We don't want any goddam scientists in our Arctic."⁷⁷ Northern explorer and scientist Tom Manning was equally critical of the administration in a confidential letter, claiming that "the present tendency of the administration is to consider the Arctic as rather an embarrassing section of the country, the development of which, and of its inhabitants should be avoided as long as public opinion will permit."⁷⁸ This

policy was evident in 1944, when Keenleyside submitted two formal resolutions to the Northwest Territories Council, calling for extensive studies on health and education throughout the north.⁷⁹ Although the motion was approved, there was no effort by the northern administration to take any initiative. Similarly, a report by the chief medical officer, calling for a program of preventative medicine, higher standards for mission hospitals and construction of new facilities under government control, was also ignored.⁸⁰ Resistance to outside probing also came from the Hudson's Bay Company, as evidenced when the general manager wrote to the CIIA research director, suggesting that Trevor Lloyd's Arctic Study should be curtailed or terminated because it touched on "controversial matters" that should not be discussed.⁸¹ But conditions in the north could no longer be so easily ignored with so many Americans on location.

Despite reluctance to approve independent research in the arctic regions, the director of the Northwest Territories and Yukon Bureau did support the work of J. Lewis Robinson, who was hired to conduct extensive studies of the eastern and western Arctic. As part of a public relations promotion, Robinson authored numerous articles appearing in government pamphlets and the *Canadian Geographical Journal* from 1944 through to 1948. These articles focused primarily on history and geography, justifying the existence of any adverse social conditions in terms of insufficient government funds and personnel. Meanwhile, pressure for more intensive research came from the private sector.

Over the fall and winter of 1943-1944, Raleigh Parkin approached interested parties on the subject of an arctic institute. Originally planned as an exclusively Canadian organization, American scientists were included in later discussions when it was agreed that a North American institution would have greater financial and academic benefits. From a Canadian perspective, Parkin described the purpose of such an organization as a means "of initiating action to arouse government and people to some sense of urgency regarding the significance of the North."

The fact is that one thing led to another as persons exchanged ideas; then they talked with other nearby friends.... Whatever its limitations, the group that thus came together had the considerable merit of including individuals who knew what they were talking about and what they were trying to do. Most of them had a real knowledge of the North and its problems and some form of responsible relations to that area. All, without exception, were determined to do something in their private capacity to overcome the neglect of the North.⁸²

The original "planning committee" was composed of Robert Beattie, Director of the Bank of Canada; Group Captain William F. Hanna of National Defence Headquarters; Diamond Jenness and A.E. Porsild of the National

Museum of Canada; Trevor Lloyd; and of course, Raleigh Parkin. After months of planning and discussion, the Arctic Institute of North America was formally founded in the fall of 1944, and later incorporated by an Act of Parliament in Canada and under the laws of New York State.⁸³

Of singular importance to the planners was the selection of the Canadian founders. After consultation with Keenleyside, it was agreed that their strategy should aim at ensuring government support for their future projects.⁸⁴ As a result, the Canadian founding members included representatives of the government sectors that would be of benefit to the future success of the new institute: the Department of Mines and Resources, the Privy Council Office and External Affairs, the National Research Council and Bank of Canada, National Defence Headquarters, as well as the Canadian Army and Air Force, and the National Museum of Canada. Also represented were the University of Alberta, the Hudson's Bay Company and McGill University. American membership was primarily a matter of individual interest, whereas "in Canada the AINA was created with the full awareness and participation of senior government officials."⁸⁵ The underlying purpose of the Ottawa group also differed from the aims of the Americans. According to Parkin, the Canadians were "more concerned with the political, administration, social and economic aspects of problems in their own North, whereas the American scientists were quite naturally primarily concerned ... with problems of scientific research."⁸⁶ Reflecting the broader interests of the Canadian founders, over half were also members of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs.⁸⁷

Following the gradual withdrawal of American troops from the Canadian northwest after the spring of 1944, visible signs of government concern appeared to subside. Other matters such as the defeat of the enemy, the birth of the United Nations, civil aviation agreements, reconstruction planning and the general election of 1945 were understandably of higher priority. It was, however, a period of study by both government and private agencies that continued on into the post-war years. The importance of northern research was expressed in an article by Lester Pearson appearing in *Foreign Affairs* in which he called for increased scientific cooperation between the arctic nations: Norway, Denmark, Canada, the United States and the Soviet Union.⁸⁸ Others spoke of the need for planned development and settlement of the polar regions. Former Acting Consul to Greenland M.J. Dunbar was particularly emphatic about the responsibility of the Canadian government.

We should remember also that if we don't go all out in the use of our northland, somebody else will; other peoples' money will be invested there and we will be left looking silly. The country is empty ... a thing which no nation can afford these days.⁸⁹

With the Americans pressuring for continuation of the wartime joint defence arrangements, there was a growing consensus that more government research, intervention and financial support of settlement and economic development would be necessary to reinforce Canadian sovereignty.

There were other issues of concern, all of which demanded major changes in policy and a restructuring of government institutions and administration. Both the "Arctic Study" and the "Arctic Survey" raised questions about the status and welfare of the indigenous peoples of the north. According to Trevor Lloyd, writing in 1946, Canadians must now "concern themselves with the north as the home of a dependent people."⁹⁰ For many years, assimilation had been considered inevitable, but new attitudes were emerging as criticism mounted over government neglect of northern education and medical care.

* * *

After T.A. Crerar's retirement as Minister of Mines and Resources in April 1945, there were several attempts to improve welfare services for the northern Indians and Inuit. As part of a national program, family allowances were introduced, but payment was to be made in the form of food or clothing unless the family was considered to be "mixed bloods" and "living the life of whites."⁹¹ In November of that year, the responsibility for native health care was transferred to the new Department of National Health and Welfare under the direction of Brooke Claxton, allowing the young minister to make rapid progress in improving health standards in the north through the initiation of extensive tuberculosis (T.B.) surveys, increased nursing aid, the training of native assistants, improved hospital facilities and provision for further studies. Steps were also taken to secularize the northern hospitals despite resistance from the Catholic Church.⁹²

Meanwhile, proposed structural changes in government administration were still under discussion, and the critics of northern government were increasingly frustrated in their seeming lack of success in achieving the many reforms they had lobbied for so intensely. The greatest obstacle facing them was not the lack of interest or foresight among senior politicians, but the conservative outlook and defensive attitude of the deputy minister, Charles Camsell, and his assistant, Roy Gibson, to any proposed change or criticism of their administration. General Foster's "33rd Recommendation" of April 1944 had called for a special committee to study extensive constitutional and administrative changes to accommodate the increased population and anticipated development in the Canadian northwest.⁹³ When the recommendation was referred to the Department of Mines and Resources, Camsell responded with great indignation, claiming that Foster had stepped far beyond the line of his duties. After a private

meeting with Heeney and Keenleyside, however, he reluctantly conceded that constitutional reorganization might be possible if based on the pattern of "colonial administrations throughout the Empire." He then suggested that three new members be added to the Northwest Territories Council to represent the Hudson's Bay Company, the Eldorado mines and the town of Yellowknife, but that any constitutional review should be conducted by only one body, the Northwest Territories Council.⁹⁴ The debate subsided temporarily, and the deputy minister continued his management of the department in the same conservative tradition as before.

Charles Camsell had been appointed Deputy Minister of Mines in 1920 and had held that position through the reorganization and creation of the Department of Mines and Resources, at which time he also assumed the position of Commissioner of the Northwest Territories. Born in the Northwest Territories, the son of a Hudson's Bay factor and a Métis mother, he was respected by his peer group for his first-hand experience and knowledge gained through his earlier work with the Geological Survey. Yet many younger men in government believed he was insensitive to the social needs of the indigenous peoples and too resistant to change or reform. His primary interest was mining, and as a consequence, he left much of the day-to-day administration to the Director of the Northwest Territories and Yukon Bureau, Roy A. Gibson.⁹⁵

Like so many others, Camsell also had conflicting images of the north. In an article written in 1946, he predicted that the northwest would attract many tourists for "there is something inherent in the human heart and the human soul that responds to the appeal of the wilderness and which no other appeal can satisfy." In the same article, however, he described the north in terms of colonial frontier development based on the exploitation of resources:

Just as the map of Canada has for a century been unrolled westward, so now it is northward that 'the tide of the Empire takes its way.' The same racial stock which has carried the flag around the world will also carry it to the farthest north....⁹⁶

Not only had Camsell rejected his Métis heritage, but he had adopted the patriotic rhetoric of 19th-century British imperialism. Moreover, his conservative attitudes continually frustrated the northern nationalists in their plans of effecting major reforms. He also believed, as did most southerners, that the northern wilderness was limitless and incapable of ever being settled by any sizable Euro-Canadian population. Inherent in the mystical "myth of the north" so deeply imbedded in the Canadian ethos was the conviction that the northern frontier would always be an "open frontier."

Just prior to his retirement from the civil service in January 1947, Camsell also recommended that the northern territories be divided in two, with the

Mackenzie District added to the Yukon's elected council. The eastern territory would still have an appointed council, and both would be responsible to a Lieutenant Governor. There would be two separate administrative units, both located in Ottawa.⁹⁷ Apparently, the northern-born deputy minister did not perceive the mountain range dividing the Yukon and Northwest Territories as an impenetrable barrier to communications and transportation. The Yukoners did, as Ottawa discovered when it added those residing in the Mackenzie District to the list of eligible voters for the Yukon's one seat in Parliament. The furor that followed ended any further thought of combining the two disparate regions.

* * *

Despite renewed debate in 1946 on the need for more drastic reorganization,⁹⁸ there was no immediate overhaul of the northern administration. Instead, Hugh Keenleyside was recalled from his post as Canadian Ambassador to Mexico to take the dual positions of Deputy Minister of Mines and Resources and Commissioner of the Northwest Territories. While it has been assumed that the appointment merely reflected a new awareness of the north's importance, the idea did not originate in Ottawa. As Keenleyside recalled many years later, he himself had suggested the appointment because of his particular interest in the Arctic, which had grown out of his wartime experience on the Northwest Territories Council.⁹⁹

Over the years, Keenleyside entertained a number of possible changes in career direction and at one time considered entering politics if "a left-wing" party had gained power. Meanwhile, he was convinced that the best route was to reform the system from inside, a commitment he outlined in a letter to Edgar J. Tarr:

Any weakening of the liberal element in the Service might have definite repercussions in Government policy — and not only in foreign affairs. It would be a cause for real regret if we ever get a truly *liberal* or *socialist* government in Canada to have that Government hamstringed.... Dr. Skelton is gone and those of us who espouse his ideals cannot maintain his traditions if we are not on the job.¹⁰⁰

In 1944, he truly believed that "the CCF [(Co-operative Commonwealth Federation)] and left-wing Liberals might be in a position to form a government after the next national election."¹⁰¹ Thus, he accepted the ambassador post in Mexico, because he thought it appropriate experience for a later cabinet post should he decide to enter politics. The Liberal victory the next year was clearly a disappointment, but the offer to head the Department of Mines and Resources was a new and exciting challenge, not only because of his keen interest in advancing northern resource development and concern for Indian and Inuit

welfare, but to "have the power to get more things done." The latter he found dismally lacking in his role as ambassador.¹⁰²

Keenleyside's achievements as deputy minister from 1947 to 1949 have failed to gain due recognition, perhaps because many of his expectations were only partially realized. By his own description, the department was "a horror story in a textbook on public or business administration," and his efforts at reform were initially a matter of "efficiency and expediency."¹⁰³ Having responsibility for the administration of both Indian Affairs and the two northern territories, it is not surprising that social reforms were a priority on his agenda. Long-term planning was difficult because of resistance by the churches and local interests, a problem he claimed was shared by Brooke Claxton and later Paul Martin as Ministers of National Health and Welfare. Nor were his efforts at social reform always appreciated by white northerners, who believed federal money should be used for building roads and townsites rather than schools and hospitals for the native population. Keenleyside was particularly critical of racial bias. When Yellowknife ignored his request to end segregation at the local hospital, he finally threatened to withdraw all federal funds until his demands were met.¹⁰⁴ Despite incurring a particularly hostile response from the townspeople, he would not tolerate any official practice of racial discrimination.

Considering his refusal to accede to demands for more financial support and representative government for the mining community, perhaps one of the finest tributes to his work appeared in the Yellowknife *News of the North* on 6 October 1950, following the announcement of his retirement.

Now Yellowknife has disagreed with Dr. Keenleyside on a number of occasions and we feel that sometimes that disagreement was justified.

He has been accused of being a Communist or at least a fellow traveller, of being a bureaucrat, a dictator, a do-gooder (if that's a bad thing) and many other things.

He may be all those things, but no one can deny he acted, according to his lights, in the interest of the people for whom he was working.

He was devoted to the cause of making the world a better place in which to live and anyone who goes forth in this day and age to fight what he sees as evil is regarded as a gallant Don Quixote, though he may actually be a Sir Galahad.

Perhaps Dr. Keenleyside was a happy combination of the two personalities.

His attempts at social reform were indeed impressive, particularly in the field of education. Specific concern for the indigenous peoples resulted in the removal of education from control by the churches, the construction of government day schools, the setting of higher standards for curriculum and teachers'

qualifications, and the introduction of innovative programs such as the welfare teacher and adult education. As a result, overall expenditures by the northern administration increased dramatically, from \$407,677 in 1944 to \$4,671,479 in 1949.¹⁰⁵

There was also a subtle change of attitude about the future of the Indians and Inuit, as evidenced by the gradual disappearance of references to assimilation or absorption from policy statements or discussion. Instead, there was now talk of adaptation through education and specialized training to enable the indigenous peoples to take an active role in the economic development of their homeland.¹⁰⁶ Keenleyside expressed a relatively enlightened definition of adaptation when he suggested that "the change must be gradual and voluntary. It must be conditioned by a recognition of the values that were developed in the more primitive forms of society."¹⁰⁷ Unfortunately, his views were not commonly held by the majority of southern bureaucrats or by Euro-Canadian newcomers to the north.

In addition to social reforms, Keenleyside initiated numerous administrative changes in structures and process, including two major reorganizations of the department. Constitutional changes were less pronounced. As previously planned, the federal constituency of the Yukon was expanded in 1947 to include the Mackenzie District, and the first local resident was appointed to the Northwest Territories Council. On the other hand, he repeatedly rejected demands for an elected or even a partially [elected] council because he believed that representative government would be detrimental to the native people unless they were also enfranchised at the territorial level. Keenleyside was successful, however, in gaining the federal franchise for the Inuit, which was granted in 1950.¹⁰⁸

Under Keenleyside's direction, a number of new committees and agencies were created to deal with northern-related matters. He also believed more studies were crucial in devising long-term development strategies. At his urging, the Geographical Bureau was created in June 1947 to collect data and sponsor research in the interests of long-term social, economic and defence planning, but with particular emphasis on northern Canada.¹⁰⁹ Of note, Diamond Jenness was appointed acting chief until Trevor Lloyd arrived from Dartmouth to take over as head of the bureau. Meanwhile, Keenleyside actively promoted a wide variety of northern research within his own department and in collaboration with others: hydrographic surveys and geodetic studies; water power assessments; geological surveys; topographical mapping; numerous medical, welfare and education studies; soil surveys; agricultural experiments; and fisheries assessments.¹¹⁰ As chairman of the Advisory Council on Arctic Research, he also promoted expansion of university studies in the polar regions.¹¹¹

In the fall of 1947, Keenleyside helped Heeney draft a proposal to establish yet another committee, this time to coordinate the efforts of all agencies involved in northern affairs. The Advisory Committee on Northern Development (ACND) received final Cabinet approval the following January, with a mandate "to advise the government on questions of policy relating to civilian and military undertakings in northern Canada and to provide for effective coordination of all government activities in that area."¹¹² The new committee was chaired by Keenleyside and included Heeney as Clerk of the Privy Council; Lester Pearson as Under-Secretary of External Affairs; General A.G.L. McNaughton, the Canadian chairman of the Permanent Joint Board on Defence; C.P. Edwards, Deputy Minister of Transport; Lieutenant-General Foulkes as Chief of General Staff; Air Marshall Curtis of Air Staff; and Dr. O.M. Solandt as Chairman of the Defence Research Board. Heads of other agencies were asked to attend when appropriate. The committee's secretariat was attached to the Privy Council Office, emphasizing the importance attached to this new institution.¹¹³

As deputy minister, Keenleyside had hoped to focus northern policy on "resources and research, not on strategy and politics."¹¹⁴ At the first meeting of the ACND, however, a heated debate broke out over the right of the military representatives to restrict classified information from members representing civilian agencies, a rift that did not auger well for Keenleyside's plans to build a coordinated program of northern development through inter-departmental cooperation.¹¹⁵ The source of tension between the two factions in government was now clearly identified. To the liberal reformers, protection of arctic sovereignty was of paramount importance; to the military, the issue threatened to interfere with its plans for North American defence. Over the next two years, the situation deteriorated as defence priorities in the Arctic gained ascendancy over civilian concerns. In October 1950, Keenleyside handed in his resignation.

Advances in social reform came to a sudden halt as the focus on the north acquired a decided military emphasis following the Soviet Union's successful test of an atomic bomb in the fall of 1949 and the onset of the Korean War the next June. Many veteran politicians and diplomats had once believed that a second world war could never happen; they could not afford to be wrong again. Even Claxton feared that the chance of an attack was now "an actual possibility."¹¹⁶ The risk of another global war and the chance of even greater nuclear devastation was a terrifying prospect, and detailed plans were set in motion to place the Arctic and sub-Arctic under tight security regulations.¹¹⁷ Inevitably, the funds previously allocated for social welfare and economic development were needed elsewhere. In contrast to the dramatic increases recorded in the three previous years, expenses by the northern administration in 1950 rose by only \$15,000; revenue showed an unprecedented increase of over \$250,000.¹¹⁸

The character of the Canadian government had also changed. St. Laurent was prime minister with Claxton as his defence minister. Keenleyside was in New York with the United Nations; Heeney had been appointed the new Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs; Lloyd was back teaching at Dartmouth; and Foster had long since retired from the federal scene. Perhaps more significantly, Robert Winters was now Minister of Resources and Development, with a former army general as his deputy minister. Although sub-committees still functioned, the main body of the Advisory Committee on Northern Development recorded no meetings from 1950 until its reactivation three years later, at which time the proposed Distant Early Warning system would necessitate renewed efforts at coordination between the military and civilian departments. Despite the temporary halt in the progress of social reform because of military priorities, the tide had turned, and government's somewhat laissez-faire attitude of the 1930s was now relegated to the past.

The various individuals who attempted to reform the system from inside government as well as those who promoted popular interest in Canada's north were for the most part idealists, undaunted by conservative traditions of the old-guard civil servants. Often their images of "north" were articulated with a compelling intensity that stirred even the most obstinate and cynical, but perhaps none so eloquently as the concluding words of a speech by Keenleyside at McMaster University in May 1949.

The North has been referred to as the frontier. But the frontier is more than a geographical area; it is a way of life, a habit of mind.

... whereas the frontier in American territory was a phenomenon of the west and its last stand in the country was staged in the mountain states, in Canada the frontier has persisted longest in the North. Here indeed is a true frontier and one that will never be fully conquered.

This [is] a matter of vital importance to the future of Canada. The virtues peculiar to frontier conditions—social and political democracy, independence and self-reliance, freedom in co-operation, hospitality and social responsibility—are virtues of particular importance in national life.

Perhaps it is here that the greatest contribution will be made by the Canadian North. Much as that area m[a]y contribute to the economic life of the country, this contribution may be of less significance than the fact that here will be a permanent source of energy from which Canada will draw strength in the never-ending fight to guard and maintain the personal and human rights of her people.... The frontier is a bastion of freedom, and the North is a permanent frontier.

Some may define his words as rhetoric, but they were a genuine attempt to define the meaning of "north" in the Canadian ethos. Keenleyside was a man of

lofty ideals and high expectations, as were many of the intellectual elite of the 1940s.

* * *

Over the years, there have been a number of attempts to promote the potential of northern development. Collective efforts included the western expansionists, whose proposed railway to Fort Churchill on Hudson Bay was designed to make Manitoba the heartland of "Nova Britannia." Similar visions were held by the Ross government and its plans for "Empire Ontario" with a deep sea port on James Bay. There were also visionaries such as Vilhjalmur Stefansson, who talked of the "northward course of the empire," of a "livable north" and a "fruitful Arctic",¹¹⁹ or Captain Bernier, who had hoped to settle a 960-acre site around his trading post and small coal mining operation on the northern tip of Baffin Island.¹²⁰ Over the years, there have been many images or myths of the north inspiring Canadians to great hopes of national destiny. The "new north" envisioned in the 1940s proved no exception.

The significance of the "northern nationalists" of the 1940s was their success in initiating the dramatic change in Ottawa's attitude towards government responsibility in the northern territories. Because of their failure to maintain the initiative of social reform and long-range development planning at the peak of the Cold War, the results of their efforts fell far short of expectations. These men had varying motives, ideals and principles which at times seemed driven by a sense of mission. Some were crusaders, others merely supporters. All believed in the future of their country. The key to that future was their image of a "new north"—a Canadian north.

Notes

¹ For a more complete analysis of the many factors involved in northern policy decisions in the 1940s, see Shelagh D. Grant, *Sovereignty or Security? Government Policy in the Canadian North, 1936-1950* (Vancouver, 1988).

² John Holmes, *The Shaping of Peace: Canada and the Search for World Order, 1943-1957, Volume 1* (Toronto, 1979), 172.

³ K.J. Rea, *The Political Economy of Northern Development*, Background Study No. 36 (Ottawa, 1976), 77.

⁴ Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (London and New Haven, 1982), 141-60; and T.D. MacLulich, "Reading the Land: The Wilderness Tradition in Canadian Letters," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 20:2 (Summer 1984), 29-44.

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⁶ For details of the Arctic patrols and early police posts, see W.R. Morrison, *Showing the Flag: The Mounted Police and Canadian Sovereignty in the North, 1894-1925* (Vancouver, 1985), 85-101.

⁷ Annual Report of the Department of the Interior (Ottawa, 31 March 1922), Appendix A.

⁸ National Archives of Canada (NAC), Raleigh Parkin Papers, MG 30 D 77, vol. 37, file "Arctic," Parkin to J.S. Willets, 24 June 1943.

⁹ NAC, Records of the Special Commissioner of Defence Projects in the Northwest, RG 36/7, vol. 7, 32nd Report, 628.

¹⁰ NAC, Parkin Papers, MG 30 D 77, vol. 37, file "Arctic," Parkin to J.S. Willets, 24 June 1943.

¹¹ Doug Owram, *The Government Generation: Canadian Intellectuals and the State, 1900-1945* (Toronto, 1986).

¹² Correspondence, M.J. Dunbar to S. Grant, 25 November 1981.

¹³ NAC, Parkin Papers, MG 30 D 77, vol. 37, file "Arctic," Notes on an interview with Trevor Lloyd, 15 November 1942.

¹⁴ Interview with Trevor Lloyd, 31 March 1982.

¹⁵ On an earlier visit to Canada as a student, Malcolm had stayed at Kingsmere as the personal guest of the prime minister (*Toronto Daily Star*, 6 September 1924).

¹⁶ Arnold Heeney, *The Things that are Caesar's: The Memoirs of a Canadian Public Servant* (Toronto, 1972), 90-91; and J.L. Granatstein, *A Man of Influence: Norman A. Robertson and Canadian Statecraft, 1929-1968* (Ottawa, 1981), 111.

¹⁷ Malcolm MacDonald, *Down North* (Toronto, 1943), 176, 233, 238 and 263.

¹⁸ Margaret Gowing, *Britain and Atomic Energy, 1939-1945* (London, 1964), 182. For full details see Chapter 6- "Canada's Part in the Project," 179-200. See also Public Records Office, London (hereafter PRO), Records of the British Atomic Energy Authority, AB 1/80 and AB 1/81.

¹⁹ MacDonald, *Down North*, 194.

²⁰ University of Dunelm, England, Malcolm MacDonald Papers, vol. 79, file 5, "Diary of Travels in the Canadian Far North," 68.

²¹ National Archives, Washington (hereafter NA), State Department Records, RG 59, Permanent Joint Board on Defence collection, vol. 10, file "Correspondence, January-March, 1943," Journal of Discussion and Decision, "Special Meeting" related to "postwar disposition of United States facilities," 4. Also a memo to all members of the Board from Henry, 24 February 1943.

²² *Ibid.*, Lewis Clarke to Jack Hickerson, 3 February 1943; and J. Hickerson to Henry, 3 March 1943.

²³ See *Foreign Relations of the United States, Washington Conference, 1943*, 630-53; and University of Dunelm, MacDonald Papers, 14/9/12.

²⁴ University of Dunelm, MacDonald Papers, vol. 14, 8/29, MacDonald to Viscount Halifax, British Embassy in Washington, 26 February 1943.

²⁵ Warren F. Kimball, Jr., *Churchill and Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence*, Volume II (Princeton, 1984), 1955-56.

²⁶ PRO, Records of the Foreign Office, FO 954, 48/100660, MacDonald to Attlee.

²⁷ In a letter dated 13 March 1943, MacDonald discussed plans for Eden's visit to Canada the first week of April and his attendance at a Cabinet War Committee meeting (MacDonald Papers, 12/5/20-24).

²⁸ NAC, Minutes of the Cabinet War Committee, RG 2/7, vol. 12, 31 March 1943. Details of MacDonald's late-night visit to King are discussed in covering letter of report to Attlee (PRO, Records of the Foreign Office, FO 954/48/100660).

²⁹ NAC, Mackenzie King Papers, MG 26 J 4, vol. 309, file 3282, "Note on Developments in North-West Canada," 6 April 1943, 6-7.

³⁰ PRO, FO 954, 48/100600/528-29, MacDonald to Attlee, 7 April 1943.

³¹ James Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada, Volume III: Peacemaking and Deterrence* (Toronto, 1972), 258-71. The British version of the events is found in Gowing, *Britain and Atomic Energy*, 159-77 and 182-87; and in pertinent documents in the PRO, British Atomic Energy Authority Records, AB 1/80 and AB 1/81, and Records of the Prime Minister's Office, Premier 3. Owing to strict secrecy in the United States, the only mentions of the verbal agreement between Churchill and Roosevelt at the May 1943 Trident Conference in Washington and subsequently the signed declaration at the Quebec Conference in August are found in the Harry Hopkins Papers as noted in Kimball, *Churchill and Roosevelt, Volume II*, 214 and 317.

³² Department of External Affairs Records, Historical Division, file 52-B(s). See reports by Hugh Keenleyside, "U.S. Activities in Northwestern Canada," 9 August 1943, by Robert Beattie, director of the Bank of Canada, 12 April 1943, and by John Baldwin, "Situation in Canadian Northwest," 12 April 1943.

³³ The mandate of the new office was described by Heeney in a memo to the prime minister. (NAC, King Papers, MG 26 J 4, vol. 309, C213761).

³⁴ For examples, see C.P. Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict, Volume 2: 1921-1948, The Mackenzie King Era* (Toronto, 1981), 362; Donald Creighton, *The Forked Road: Canada, 1939-1957* (Toronto, 1976), 74; and J.L. Granatstein, *Canada's War: The Politics of the Mackenzie King Government, 1939-1945* (Toronto, 1975), 322.

³⁵ The entire collection of the Special Commissioner's records is located in the NAC, RG 36/7, 51 volumes. For a concise version of the recommendations, see the Privy Council Office Records, RG 2/18, vol. 50, file D-19-D-5-R, "Recommendations From Special Commissioners Office."

³⁶ NAC, Records of the Special Commissioner, RG 36/7, vol. 3 and 4, files "War Cabinet"; Records of the Privy Council Office, RG 2/18, vol. 20 and 22, files "Special Commissioner."

³⁷ NAC, Special Commissioner's Records, RG 36/7, vol. 15, file 28-12 and vol. 47, file "Health and Education," various correspondence, memos and minutes with special focus on the fall of 1944.

³⁸ Heeney, *The Things that are Caesar's*, 72.

³⁹ NAC, Mackenzie King Papers, MG 26 J 4, vol. 350, file 3788/242014.

⁴⁰ Ibid., "Speech at the Canadian Club" Ottawa, 18 January 1945.

⁴¹ NAC, Wartime Information Board Records, RG 36/31, vol. 13, file 2-4, D.L. Dunton to N.A. Robertson, 29 May 1943.

⁴² Ibid.; also NAC, Trevor Lloyd Papers, MG 30 B 79, vol. 37, file 798.

⁴³ *Financial Post*, 3 April 1943; the *Edmonton Bulletin* article as reported in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, 23 June 1943; and "Alaskan Highway, Opening up the Canadian North-West, A Back Door becomes a Life-Line," *The Times*, 5 July 1943.

⁴⁴ Prince of Wales Heritage Centre, Yellowknife (hereafter PWHC), Northwest Territories Council Minutes, vol. 13, 23 June 1943, 3112-13.

⁴⁵ NAC, Wartime Information Board Records, RG 36/31, vol. 13, file 2-4, External Affairs teletype to Washington Legation, 21 June 1943.

⁴⁶ Ibid., Dunton to Foster, 24 September 1943.

⁴⁷ Ibid., copy of memo from Foster to Heeney, 8 October 1943.

⁴⁸ NAC, RG 2/18, vol. 43, file D-19-2, Keenleyside to Mackenzie King, 29 July 1943.

⁴⁹ Ibid., Correspondence Camsell to Foster, 15 October 1943; Traffic Control Board press release and accompanying memos; draft of brochure, "Canada's Pacific Northwest Calls You."

⁵⁰ NAC, Records of the Special Commissioner, RG 36/7, vol. 4, file "War Cabinet," memo from Heeney to Cabinet, 6 October 1943.

⁵¹ NAC, Records of the Privy Council Office, RG 2/18, vol. 70, file D-17-2, "Minutes of Meeting to Discuss the Canol Development," 2 December 1943.

⁵² NAC, King Papers, MG 26 J 4, vol. 350, file 3788, Keenleyside to N. Robertson, 11 December 1943.

⁵³ J. Pickersgill, ed., *The Mackenzie King Record, Volume 1: 1939-1944* (Toronto, 1960), 644.

⁵⁴ NAC, King Papers, MG 26 J 4, vol. 70, file D-17-2 (1944), King to Atherton, 25 February 1944.

⁵⁵ NAC, King Papers, MG 26 J 4, vol. 309, file 3282, "Exchange of Notes" and related memos, pp. C21378-21387. Also vol. 350, file 3788 for "Exchange of Notes" and correspondence related to the 1946 agreement.

⁵⁶ As reported to the State Department, NA, RG 59, 842.00 PR/339.

⁵⁷ NA, International Conferences, Commissions and Expositions Records (hereafter Wartime Commissions Records), RG 43, Joint Economic Committee, box 1, "Miscellaneous," Carl Goldenberg to R.A.C. Henry, 21 June 1941.

⁵⁸ Ibid., RG 43, Joint Economic Committee, vol. 4, file "J. Rettie," Draft of "Long-Run Economic Collaboration Between Canada and the United States," 2 September 1941, and vol. 7, file 406 "Report on Canadian-United States Relations" dated 8 April 1942.

⁵⁹ Ibid., vol. 5, file 405, press release, 25 January 1943.

⁶⁰ Benjamin Kizer, "The North Pacific Planning Project," American Council Paper no. 2, for the Eighth Conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations, Mont-Tremblant, Quebec, December 1942.

⁶¹ *The Sunday Oregonian*, 6 December 1942. A large full-coloured map identified the location of the various mineral resources, including oil at Norman Wells and radium in the vicinity of Great Bear Lake. James Rettie, director of the project and graduate of the London School of Economics, was quoted as saying that if the "northern empire is not developed, then we shall not deserve to hold it."

⁶² Pickersgill, *The Mackenzie King Record, Volume 1*, 436.

⁶³ Department of External Affairs, *Documents on Canadian External Relations (DCER)*, Volume 9 (Ottawa, 1977), 1451 and 1452-55, "Extract of War Cabinet Minutes," 23 and 30 December 1942 and 13 January 1943.

⁶⁴ NA, Wartime Commissions Records, RG 43, "Joint Economic Committee" vol. 7, item 406, also vol. 6, "Water Resources" file and vol. 5, "Rettie" file.

⁶⁵ Ibid., RG 43, vol. 4, "U.S. Joint Economic Committee" file, Charles Camsell to James Rettie, 16 May 1944.

⁶⁶ Charles Camsell, ed., *Canada's New Northwest: A Report of the North Pacific Planning Project* (Ottawa, 1947).

⁶⁷ NAC, Trevor Lloyd Papers, MG 30 B 79, vol. 37, file 798, memo to John Grierson, 20 May 1943.

⁶⁸ NAC, Records of the Privy Council Office, RG 2/18, vol. 21, file A-25-2, Brooke Claxton to Heeney, 18 June 1943.

⁶⁹ A copy of Trevor Lloyd's study is still available at the National Library of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs, "The Geography and Administration of Northern Canada" (1947). Details on the progress of the study from 1943-1947 may be found in the NAC, Parkin Papers, MG 30 D 77, vol. 41, file "Arctic Study."

⁷⁰ NAC, Parkin Papers, MG 30 D 77, vol. 41, file "Arctic Study," Parkin to R. Adamson, 27 July 1943.

⁷¹ NAC, Records of the Wartime Information Board, RG 36/31, vol. 13, file 8-11, "1946 CILA Membership List."

⁷² NAC, Canadian Institute of International Affairs Papers, MG 28 I 250, vol. 2, file 2, "The Future of the Institute." Also see the *Annual Reports* for the years 1938 through to 1943.

⁷³ Trevor Lloyd gave a total of 17 lectures. The directly sponsored study groups, lectures and publications are listed in the CILA *Annual Reports* for the years 1943 through to 1949.

⁷⁴ NAC, Parkin Papers, MG 30 D 77, vol. 31, file "Trevor Lloyd," Lloyd to Parkin, 11 April 1944, 5 August 1944; also vol. 37, file "Arctic," Parkin to J.S. Willits, 24 June 1943.

⁷⁵ G.J. Wherrett, "Survey of Health Conditions and Medical and Hospital Services in the North West Territories," *Canadian Journal of Economic and Political Science*, 11 (January 1945): 59.

⁷⁶ Correspondence, J. Lewis Robinson, professor of geography at the University of British Columbia, to S. Grant, 10 November 1981.

⁷⁷ Correspondence, M.J. Dunbar, Director of Marine Sciences at McGill University, to S. Grant, 10 November 1981.

⁷⁸ NAC, Parkin Papers, MG 30 D 77, vol. 24, file "T. Manning," Manning to Parkin, 10 June 1941.

⁷⁹ NAC, Privy Council Records, RG 2/18, vol. 22, file A-25-3(2), Keenleyside to Heeney, 19 January 1944.

⁸⁰ PWHC, Northwest Territories Council Minutes, vol. 13, 25 April 1944 and vol. 14, 3185(2).

⁸¹ NAC, Parkin Papers, MG 30 D 77, vol. 41, file "CILA," Parkin to Adamson, 24 July 1944.

⁸² Raleigh Parkin, "The Origin of the Institute," *Arctic*, XIX (March 1966): 13-15.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 10-14.

⁸⁴ NAC, Parkin Papers, MG 30 D 77, vol. 31, file "Trevor Lloyd," Parkin to Lloyd, 2 May 1944.

⁸⁵ NAC, Trevor Lloyd Papers, MG 30 B 79, vol. 17, file 381-88, "Draft of GRP Article."

⁸⁶ Parkin, "The Origin of the Institute," 11.

⁸⁷ S.D. Grant, "Search for a Northern Policy: Impact of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs," unpublished manuscript on file at the CILA national library, 1981, Appendix VII-1.

⁸⁸ Lester Pearson, "Canada Looks 'Down North'," *Foreign Affairs*, 24 (Winter 1945-1946): 643.

⁸⁹ NAC, Parkin Papers, MG 30 D 77, vol. 39, file "Clippings," speech by M.J. Dunbar, CBC, 9 June 1946.

⁹⁰ Trevor Lloyd, *Frontier of Destiny: The Canadian Arctic* (Toronto, 1946), 8.

⁹¹ Yukon Archives, RG YI, series 2, vol. 44, file 35563, Gibson to Jeckell, 1 May 1945.

⁹² NAC, King Papers, MG 26 J 4, vol. 281, file 2927, Claxton to King, 6 December 1946.

⁹³ NAC, Report of the Special Commissioner, RG 36/7, vol. 5, 11th Report.

⁹⁴ NAC, Privy Council Records, RG 2/18, vol. 21, file A-25-3(1), Camsell to Heeney, 5 May 1944; Heeney to Camsell, 20 May 1944; Memo Keenleyside to N. Robertson, 24 May 1944, P.A. Cumyns to Camsell, 11 November 1944; RG 2/18, vol. 50, file D-19-9-5R, Memo Keenleyside to Heeney, 18 May 1944; and the Records of the Special Commissioner, RG 36/7, vol. 4, file "War Cabinet Recommendations—Outside," Heeney to Foster, 9 May 1944; Foster to Heeney, 23 May 1944; Heeney to Foster, 26 May 1944; Northern Affairs Records, RG 22, vol. 270, file 40-10-1-pt 1, Keenleyside to Gibson, 7 July 1944.

⁹⁵ R. Finnie, *Canada Moves North* (Toronto, 1948), 69.

⁹⁶ C. Camsell, "The New Northwest," *Canadian Geographical Journal*, 23 (December 1946): 264.

⁹⁷ NAC, Privy Council Records, RG 2/18, vol. 57, file A-25-3(1), Camsell to King, 5 January 1946.

⁹⁸ Ibid., Memo J.A. Glenn to Cabinet, 1 March 1946; acting special commissioner to Heeney, 6 March 1944 and other correspondence and memos.

⁹⁹ Hugh Keenleyside, *Memoirs of Hugh Keenleyside: On the Bridge of Time, Volume 2* (Toronto, 1982), 281.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 219.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 220.

¹⁰² Ibid., 269-71, also 225 and 273.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 288.

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Hugh Keenleyside, 29 May 1980.

¹⁰⁵ Figures are derived from the financial statements in the *Annual Reports of the Department of Mines and Resources* (1944-1949).

¹⁰⁶ NAC, Privy Council Records, RG 2/18, unsigned memo to Heeney, 15 June 1945.

¹⁰⁷ Speech by Dr. Hugh Keenleyside to McMaster University, 14 May 1949.

¹⁰⁸ NAC, RG 22, vol. 270, file 40-10-1 (pt 1), "Political Democracy," 11-12.

¹⁰⁹ NAC, Records of the Geographical Bureau, RG 92, vol. 1, file 1-1; See also the Lloyd Papers, MG 30 B 97, vol. 37, files 789-790; and the Privy Council Records, RG 2/18, vol. 70, file D-17-13.

¹¹⁰ NAC, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, RG 22, vol. 147, file 5-0-1-17, Keenleyside to A.A. Day, 16 June 1949.

¹¹¹ Ibid., vol. 153, file 5-0-1-35, press release #1981.

¹¹² NAC, Privy Council Records, RG 2/18, vol. 57, file A-25-5, Heeney to Keenleyside, 21 November 1947, Memo to Cabinet, 16 January 1948, "Northern Canada—Development and Policy," 4.

¹¹³ NAC, Northern Affairs Records, RG 85, vol. 300, file 1009-3-1, Minutes of the Advisory Committee on Northern Development.

¹¹⁴ Keenleyside, *Memoirs, Volume 2*, 310.

¹¹⁵ NAC, Northern Affairs Records, RG 85, vol. 300, file 1009-3-1, Minutes of the Advisory Committee on Northern Development, 2 February 1948.

¹¹⁶ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates* (second session 1950), 324.

¹¹⁷ NAC, RG 85, vol. 302, file 1009-4 (pt 1), "Security Recommendations for the Canadian Arctic Regions," Privy Council Office, 29 June 1949.

¹¹⁸ *Annual Report of the Department of Resources and Development* (1950-1951).

¹¹⁹ Vilhjalmur Stefansson, *The Northward Course of Empire* (New York, 1922).

¹²⁰ Y. Dorion-Robitaille, *Captain J.E. Bernier's Contribution to Canadian Sovereignty in the Arctic* (Ottawa, 1978), 30 and 99.

10

American Defence of the Arctic, 1939-1960

Originally prepared as “Weather Stations, Airfields, and Research in the High Arctic, 1939-1959 – An American Perspective,” presented at the Canadian Historical Association Annual Meeting, Victoria, B.C., 27 May 1990.

The nature and extent of United States military action in Greenland and Arctic Canada during World War II and the Cold War have never been assigned major significance in American history books, likely because most activities took place on foreign soil. What began as a few weather stations and landing fields during the war would expand in the following decade to include a sophisticated network of radar and radio communications, permanent research stations (and not-so-permanent ones on floating ice islands), extravagant military exercises, a large military base capable of housing over 15,000, and an enormous nuclear bomb shelter built into the Greenland ice cap, capable of sustaining a sizable community for two years and powered by a portable atomic generator. The challenges were formidable, but they were met with extraordinary vision and creativity. For the most part, the defence activity was undertaken with the approval of the foreign governments in question, often reluctantly, sometimes begrudgingly. While the United States held a “full house” in terms of ample manpower, finances, and scientific expertise to accomplish its visionary goals, Canada and Denmark held the trump cards – the lands upon which the dream was to take place.

The War Years, 1939-1945

As the grey, ghostlike ship slipped through the fog-bound waters of Davis Strait, and on across the Arctic Circle, the passengers solemnly gathered on deck to witness the arrival of King Borealis and his court. Eyes sparkling with anticipation, each man stepped forward to receive a scroll inscribed with “The Oath of the Arctic Brotherhood,” proof of his entry into “the ancient and secret society of the Frozen North.” It was summer 1941, and the ship, an American

troop carrier, was transporting handpicked volunteers from the United States Army Air Forces, on a secret mission to establish an air base in Greenland.¹ In command was the veteran arctic explorer Col. Bernt Balchen, a Norwegian-American who had flown Admiral Byrd over the South Pole. Unwittingly, the ceremony was aptly symbolic of the polar frontier traditions that inspired American initiatives in the next two decades.

World War II in the Arctic was a secret war, a lonely war, and a merciless one. The enemy was almost incidental, as was the nationality of the territory over which the battle was waged. The rigorous climate, the isolation, and the vastness of the Arctic dominated all else, shaping and controlling the thoughts and actions of those directly involved. In the words of Col. Balchen, "When you fight the Arctic, you fight on the Arctic's terms.... Most of the time you win, but sometimes you lose, and the Arctic shows no mercy to a loser...."² The unsung heroes were both winners and losers: the Air Force ground crew working at 50° below zero, members of the United States Coast Guard patrolling the ice-infested waters, technicians in isolated weather stations buried for months under eighteen feet of snow, those who risked their lives to rescue the stranded airmen downed on the Greenland ice cap and those who died in their attempts. When the war with Germany and Japan ended in 1945, the conquest of the Arctic continued on through the Cold War. Not since the days of the British Admiralty's search for the Northwest Passage had the drive and energy of pilots, navigators, cartographers, scientists, and engineers been so single-mindedly focused on the polar regions of North America. The secondary inspiration and motivations were hauntingly similar to those of the early explorers, but the military activities in the Arctic around the mid-twentieth century would belong more to American history than European, regardless of sovereign jurisdiction.

At the outset of the war, it was the veteran polar explorers and scientists who were most influential in the design of American military initiatives for the Arctic. The older generation, like Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Prof. William H. Hobbs, and Sir G. Hubert Wilkins, were behind the scenes, acting as consultants and lobbyists. The next generation, such as Dr. William S. Carlson (Lt. Col.), Dr. Alexander Forbes (Lt. Col.), and Comm. Donald M. MacMillan (United States Navy (USN) ret.), was commissioned to conduct aerial surveys, map waters, and assist in the construction of Arctic bases. The younger and more hardy, like Capt. Bernt Balchen (Air Corps [AC]), Lt. Comm. Charles J. Hubbard (United States Naval Reserve [USNR]), Capt. John Crowell (AC), Capt. J. Glenn Dyer (AC), Lt. Comm. Isaac Schlossbach (USN ret.), Edward Goodale (civilian), Lt. Frederick E. Crockett (USNR), Dr. John W. Marr, Lt. Max Demorest, and others, were assigned key leadership roles. Their enthusiastic optimism overcame initial doubts of government leaders, the Pentagon, and the White House.³

The expertise of the polar veterans proved invaluable, and in turn, they trained yet another generation of experts, many of them eager to return after the war had ended. A surprising number were caught up in the excitement of a frontier adventure, ready to face impossible challenges that pitted man against the harsh Arctic environment, testing their endurance and mettle to the limits. In one sense, it was a quest, similar to those of Roman and Greek mythology, but the distinguishing characteristics were stamped with the psychology and spirit of the American western frontier. These twentieth-century adventurers had discovered new territory to challenge the pioneer instincts, but this time it was not a frontier of settlement, but one of science and technology, and of military development.

The history of the United States Armed Forces in the Arctic is only a small fragment of American military history and, as such, gained little attention because there was so little enemy action. Similarly, the account represents an equally minor portion of Canadian and Danish history, for the most part ignored by national historians unless considered in the context of foreign relations. Just as few Americans wish to celebrate or criticize the exploits of their countrymen on foreign soil, historians of Greenland and the Canadian Arctic tended to minimize or ignore the accomplishments of foreigners on their lands. Yet the saga of the American polar aviators, meteorologists, and scientists should not lay buried because of national sensitivities.

There were essentially two 'Arctics' involved in World War II. One included the treeless barrens of the High Arctic, Greenland, the Canadian Archipelago, its adjacent mainland, and Ungava. The second was comprised of the Subarctic regions of northern Quebec, Alaska, the Yukon, and the upper Mackenzie Valley. The focus here is primarily on the Arctic, with comparative references to the Subarctic. There are also two histories, inter-related in terms of effect and process: one of a truly uncommon period of scientific advances in Arctic development, and the other, a diplomatic nightmare of negotiations to find a compromise for conflicting military and political sovereignty agendas. The following will centre on the accomplishments, emphasizing motivating influences and effects, and fully cognizant that interpretation of political implications may differ according to the national bias of the reader. Perhaps of greater significance are the intellectual questions of underlying incentive, ethos, and psyche.

* * *

During the interwar years, an increasing number of Americans were actively involved in scientific polar explorations. Some were drawn to the frozen glaciers of Greenland, others to the forbidding Torngat Mountains of northern Labrador, to the sparsely inhabited islands of the Archipelago, or to Antarctica. Many were

members of major polar expeditions; a number were simply members of field parties sent by American universities. The role of aviation in the Great War added a new dimension to Arctic research. Apart from a new means of transport, the feasibility of a northern air route demanded aerial surveys, accurate mapping, climatology studies, and meteorological data.⁴ Names of American aviators began to appear in the annals of twentieth-century polar exploration, including Lincoln Ellsworth, Ben Eielson, Bernt Balchen, and George Hubert Wilkins, to name a few.⁵ Yet despite the many achievements, the North Atlantic was still considered far too dangerous and costly for commercial aviation.

Following the Great War, the United States Air Corps became increasingly influential in planning the defence of North America. With the outbreak of war in Europe, mobilization began immediately. Within the limits of the Neutrality Act, defence strategy eventually allowed all possible aid to the Allies, including aircraft and munitions, in hopes of preventing the spread of hostilities to the western hemisphere. The Lend-Lease Agreement of March 1941, however, would require an alternate route to the vulnerable cargo ships for transporting American planes to Britain. With the support of the president and Congress, the size and status of the air force grew steadily under the leadership of Commanding General H.H. Arnold. Effective air defence also required accurate weather forecasting, which led to expansion of its weather wing.⁶ By the time of the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, army generals and admirals were complaining that the United States Air Corps was enjoying “virtual autonomy in the War Department.”⁷

America’s indirect involvement in the war grew rapidly as the Panzer Divisions began to roll westward across Europe. First, the Ogdensburg Agreement in August 1940 established the Permanent Joint Board on Defence (PJBD) to facilitate cooperation with Canada, then the next month, the “bases for destroyers” agreement with Britain provided the United States with ninety-nine-year leases on air and naval bases in Newfoundland. Finally, in March 1941, the Lend-Lease Act was passed in Congress, giving official assent to supply aircraft and munitions to the Allies. To facilitate air cargo transport and the ferrying of large bombers across the North Atlantic, the Gander and Stephenville airports were transferred to the United States Army Air Forces (USAAF), and in July 1941, it assumed control over all American planes flying to Britain.⁸

Yet there were complications over which they had no control. Most weather patterns in northern Europe originated in the North Atlantic, where the southward movement of Arctic air collided with the northward thrust of warm tropical air. Some advance warning was critical to allow air and naval commanders in the battlefield to plan their strategies with precision. Moreover, violent storms would generate over the Greenland ice cap, creating havoc for

aircraft travelling on a northerly path across the Atlantic Ocean. Inevitably, the need for more Arctic weather and radio stations became a high priority, both to aid the Allied forces in Europe and to ensure safe delivery of munitions and aircraft to Britain.⁹

Long-range bombers and commercial craft could fly non-stop from Gander to Prestwick, Scotland, but short-range fighter planes were destined to travel by ship at the peril of German submarine attack. Convinced of its feasibility, two Arctic veterans spearheaded a campaign for expansion of the North Atlantic air route. The renowned geologist Prof. William H. Hobbs fiercely lobbied the State, Navy, and War Departments in Washington, while polar aviation expert Bernt Balchen discussed the options with USAAF Gen. H.H. Arnold. The latter two were convinced that Greenland and Iceland were ideally located to provide a network of airfields, weather stations, and radio communications between Newfoundland and Britain.¹⁰

Yet Greenland and Iceland were also vulnerable to enemy attack. After Denmark fell to Germany in April 1940, the security of Greenland's west coast cryolite mine was at risk, cryolite being an essential component in the manufacture of aluminum. With the approval of the Free Danish Legation in Washington, the U.S. Coast Guard loaned personnel and guns to guard the mine and added Greenland to its regular patrol.¹¹ All available vessels were refitted and put into service, including Admiral Byrd's aged flagship, USCGC *Bear*, whose history dated back to the rescue of the Greely expedition in 1884 and patrol of the Alaskan coast at the turn of the century.¹² Germany's surprise attack on Iceland in the spring of 1941, coupled with the U.S. Coast Guard's discovery and capture of twenty Nazi troopers on the northeast coast of Greenland, fuelled the sense of urgency.¹³ Negotiations commenced immediately for permission to locate American bases on the two islands.

War exempted diplomatic convention, and thus a U.S. survey party was already at work in Greenland when President Roosevelt announced in mid-April that an official agreement had been signed, placing the island under United States protection. The objective of the South Greenland Survey Expedition was to locate sites for air bases and weather stations.¹⁴ The first choice, Narsarsuaq (Blue West 1), lay at the southern tip of Greenland. The seasoned Arctic explorer Comm. Donald MacMillan USN came out of retirement to help chart the approaches, and by July, a construction task force was hard at work. Within three months, an all-weather airfield was ready for the arrival of its first plane. That same summer, American troops arrived in Iceland to relieve the beleaguered British garrison, and by September, work had begun on the expansion of Meeks Field near Reykjavík. Another airfield was built at Søndre Strømfjord (Blue West 8) on the west coast of Greenland to provide an alternative to the fog-prone

Narsarsuaq. An emergency landing strip would also be built near Angmagssalik on the east coast.¹⁵ Eventually, there were a total of thirteen weather stations and radio communications posts in Greenland, five on the east coast and eight on the west, all coded by number and designated Blue East or West. In addition, a USN Loran radar station was built at Fredriksdal.¹⁶

Meanwhile, more ambitious plans were under way. With expectations of heavy air traffic as a result of the Lend-Lease agreement, an alternative to the Gander airport was essential. It was also believed that a second and possibly a third air route would be required. Gen. Arnold forwarded the idea of connecting the western aircraft factories to Prestwick by a "great circle route" stretching from [Great] Falls, Montana, through the Canadian Arctic and on to Greenland and Iceland. To differentiate from the North Atlantic, or "Arnold Line," this one was called the "Crimson Route."¹⁷ On 30 June 1941, a survey party led by the U.S. president's son, Capt. Elliott Roosevelt, was dispatched to Labrador and northern Quebec. He was accompanied by Lt. Comm. Alexander Forbes USNR, a physiologist, sailor, and pilot, and a participant in the 1931 aerial photographic survey of northern Labrador. The Roosevelt party was initially instructed to locate two sites, one in the general area of Lake Melville in southern Labrador and another in either northern Labrador or Quebec. Further reconnaissance missions were later sent to Baffin Island and Greenland.¹⁸

Much to Roosevelt's surprise, a Canadian party led by Eric Fry of the Dominion Geodetic Survey was already at the western end of Lake Melville when he arrived at that location. Their selection of a site on Goose Bay near the mouth of the North West River was considered the best, but Roosevelt appeared unconcerned, claiming the Canadians would not have the "equipment or manpower" to build an air base in time to meet the demand. He proceeded ahead in the belief that the project would be turned over to the Americans. As it happened, Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) engineers immediately set to work, with the result that construction began in late September and the first plane landed at Goose Bay in December 1941 – two days after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.¹⁹ In addition to this site, Elliott Roosevelt selected three other locations, the first some five miles from the fur trading post at Fort Chimo on the shores of the Koksoak River leading into Ungava Bay, the second near the head of Frobisher Bay on Baffin Island, and a third on Padloping Island further north on the east coast of Baffin Island. The possibility of a fourth site in the area of the Torngat Mountains in northern Labrador was rejected.²⁰ Ironically, it was in roughly that same area that the remnants of a German weather station would be discovered forty years later.²¹

In mid-August, President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill met secretly on the British HMS *Prince of Wales* anchored in Argentia Bay,

Newfoundland. Among the items discussed were Gen. Arnold's ferrying plans, including the Crimson Route. These apparently met with Churchill's approval, as preparations began at once for construction of an airfield at Bluie West (W) 8 (Narsarsuaq), an emergency field at Bluie East (E) 2 (Søndre Strømfjord), as well as three weather stations at Fort Chimo (Crystal I), Frobisher Bay (Crystal II), and Padloping Island (Crystal III). The Crystal sites also bore the code names of Bookie, Chaplet, and Delight respectively.²²

In addition to Alexander Forbes and Donald MacMillan, other polar experts were co-opted for the Crystal and Bluie projects, including Lt. Comm. Charles J. Hubbard USNR, who had been with Forbes on previous aerial surveys of northern Labrador; Prof. William S. Carlson and Lt. Max Demorest, both members of the University of Michigan Greenland Expeditions; Lt. Comm. Schlossbach USN, who had been associated with polar aviator Sir Hubert Wilkins; Maj. John Crowell AC, who had sailed with Donald MacMillan; Capt. J. Glenn Dyer AC; Maj. Frederick Crockett USNR; Col. Bernt Balchen AC; and civilian Edward Goodale, all of whom had served under Admiral Byrd. They were all volunteers, selected for their Arctic experience and former commands.²³

Five separate construction crews, weather station personnel, food, and building materials were dispatched in trawler convoys at the end of September 1941. Those bound for the Crystal project left Halifax Harbour on the 28th, comprised of five Boston trawlers and three Norwegian sealers, and led by the mother ship, USAT *Sicilien*. Lt. Comm. Alexander Forbes was to act as pilot; Col. R.W.C. Wimsatt of the Air Corps and Lt. Comm. C.J. Hubbard USNR were in charge. With remarkable speed, the three Crystal weather and radio stations were completed by mid-November. Utilizing prefabricated housing, the facilities at Chimo and Padloping were erected without incident. The contingent sent to Frobisher Bay, however, was unable to find Roosevelt's proposed site and settled on a temporary location on an island, midway along the inlet. Eight to eleven officers and men remained at each of the Crystal stations and Bluie E-2, while thirty were posted to Bluie W-8 to man the airfield. The personnel roster for each Crystal station would eventually include a commanding officer, medical officer, mechanic, two or three weather operators, two radio operators, a cook, a dog driver, and, if available, an Arctic expert.²⁴

The phenomenal speed at which a project moved from concept to completion was expected in wartime, but it also established a pattern of American action that continued into peacetime. Expediency was achieved by planning and preparing on the assumption that political approvals, if necessary, would be granted at the final hour. According to Lt. Comm. Hubbard's report, authority for establishing the Crystal bases was "contained in a letter from the Department of External Affairs, Ottawa, over the signature of Laurent Beaudry."²⁵ Authority had indeed

been requested by Pierrepont Moffat, the United States Minister for Canada, in a letter of August 22nd addressed to the acting secretary of state, the ailing Ernest Lapointe. Mackenzie King, who retained the secretary of state portfolio, was on a prolonged visit to England. Permission was requested

to establish immediately at Fort Chimo, Upper Frobisher Bay and Cumberland Sound, a weather and emergency station consisting of a radio station, direction finder, meteorological station, and essential housing for a minimum operating personnel and aircraft emergency crew, medical detachment and the crews of three large airplanes.²⁶

Responding that same day for the “acting secretary,” the assistant under-secretary responsible for European affairs, Laurent Beaudry, approved the request “as embodying arrangements of a temporary and emergency character.” The approval included the government’s “right to replace the above stations” with Canadian facilities at such time “they are in a position to do so.” Beaudry also verified that there would be no lease or expenditure expected of Canada.²⁷

There appears to be no written record that the prime minister, the Cabinet War Committee, or the secretary of state for external affairs was aware of the request and/or Beaudry’s reply. Events in Britain and the continent drew attention elsewhere. As a result, it would be well over a year before formal authority for the Crystal weather stations and airfields was conveyed in a note dated 17 October 1942.²⁸ On the other hand, local authorities and the RCAF were fully aware of the new U.S. weather stations. Several RCMP visited the locations while on patrol that winter, as did Lt. Comm. Hubbard in a ski-equipped plane in mid-March, accompanied by two Canadian airmen attached to the Canadian Ferry Command. Over the winter and spring of 1942, sites for permanent landing strips were laid out only at Fort Chimo, as the Crowell Island site in Frobisher Bay was considered only temporary and the ground conditions at Padloping proved unfavourable.²⁹

In February 1942, William Carlson was commissioned as a lieutenant colonel in the USAAF and asked to design a route connecting the Crystal fields to Great Falls, Montana, by way of Hudson Bay. His choice was The Pas and Churchill in Manitoba, and Coral Harbour on Southampton Island in Hudson Bay. Initially, it was believed that this “interior” ferry route, which became known as the Crimson Route, would provide more reliable flying weather and would shorten the route from California by some 600 miles. It was also suggested that these bases would furnish the beginnings of a direct postwar route to Russia. As it happened, these airfields, along with those at Fort Chimo and Frobisher Bay, were built over the summers of 1942 and 1943 but never used for ferrying planes. The size of the hospitals built at Churchill and Frobisher gave rise to rumours that the route might have been designed to evacuate wounded American soldiers,

but the facilities were never completed. In the end, the most important contribution of the bases in the Canadian Arctic would be their meteorological function, which was critical for the safety of planes flying the North Atlantic Route.³⁰

In spite of the construction activity during 1941, the Canadian Cabinet War Committee claimed it was not aware of the weather stations until approval was requested in May 1942,³¹ four days after a directive had been issued by the American Chiefs of Staff to begin construction on the landing strips.³² An additional route was recommended, extending from Detroit to Greenland by way of Kapuskasing, Moosonee, and Chimo, but never proceeded past the preliminary investigation stage. Noting that President Roosevelt and the USAAF generals had given "absolute priority" to the project, the PJBD estimated the cost of the two routes and expansion of the Goose Bay facilities to be roughly \$200 million. Reportedly, members of the War Committee were stunned, yet reluctant to refuse cooperation.³³ After further study, verbal approval was granted on 1 July 1942, with the understanding that the United States would bear all costs of construction, maintenance, defence, and administration. By then, the USAAF had withdrawn its plans for the Detroit route.³⁴

The requests for other approvals that multiplied after the U.S.'s entry into the war were reportedly accompanied with a change in American attitudes. Under-Secretary Norman Robertson warned of the Americans' new sense of "manifest destiny" and the tendency to view "Canada as an internal domestic relationship." The assistant under-secretary warned of a colonial attitude and an inclination "to act first and seek approval later -- if at all."³⁵ Another senior official, Escott Reid, admitted later that much of the misunderstanding arose from Canada's failure to understand the degree of "independence of the Defense Department from the State Department."³⁶ Increasingly over the next year, recommendations from the PJBD would be referred back for revision. Unable to contribute financial or manpower support for the projects, the Canadian government could not help but feel pressured and perhaps even embarrassed, if not resentful. The American military, on the other hand, became increasingly impatient and frustrated by delays in approval.³⁷ The Canadian public was not informed. It was wartime and secrecy prevailed.

The American military planners continued on, seemingly ignoring or unaware of Canadian political concerns. Most believed that the PJBD had provided the machinery to facilitate the necessary cooperation and, as declared in the official history of the USAAF, that "a practical arrangement adopted early in 1942 permitted decentralization to regional commanders to conclude agreements required for the common defense."³⁸ Cognizant of growing tensions, the State Department commissioned a series of intelligence studies in 1942 in an

effort to gain a clearer understanding of the Canadian people and the motivation behind their government's foreign policy. A preliminary report suggested that "Canada has always suffered from an inferiority complex about her southern neighbour" and was envious of the "wealth and vast scale of American enterprise and industry."³⁹ A longer and more detailed study probed deeper into the influences affecting government policies, and in summary claimed that Canada's foreign policy was one of

political expediency and opportunism which avoids dramatic pronouncements and even more startling commitments. It suits the conservative mind of the average Canadian. To date, this policy has been able to keep Canada out of too deep an involvement in the wars of the British Commonwealth or too great a subservience to the policies of the United States.⁴⁰

The same study also suggested that cooperation was attainable "as long as Americans are careful to remember the susceptibilities and sensitiveness of a small, but proud people."⁴¹

Finally, in March 1943, after request for clarification, John D. Hickerson, the assistant chief of European affairs for the State Department and American secretary for the PJBD, wrote to Maj. Gen. Guy Henry, the Senior U.S. Army representative on the PJBD, admitting that the United States did not "have blanket authority for construction of all war projects in Canada," and that "special permission of the Canadian government must be obtained for the construction of any proposed airfields."⁴² Subsequently, many of the earlier agreements were modified, or confirmed, by a series of letters in the summer of 1943, between Maj. Gen. Guy Henry and H.L. Keenleyside, Canadian Secretary of the PJBD.⁴³ Tensions continued throughout the remaining war years and on into the postwar period. At the source of the discord was the fact that in Washington, the military agenda received priority consideration compared to the primacy attached to Ottawa's political concerns. The tensions were played out between the two governments and their chiefs of staff. Americans in the Canadian Arctic appeared unaffected. Most residents, whether fur traders, RCMP, missionaries, or natives, welcomed new faces and were eager to give assistance. In Greenland, there were no tensions ever reported between Americans, Free Danes, or Native Inuit.

Owing to the successes of German U-boat activity, the safe conduct of aircraft and troops to Britain became increasingly dependent upon air transport across the North Atlantic. Moreover, men of the U.S. Eighth Air Command had arrived in Britain by July 1942 and were waiting impatiently for their planes. The completion of the Goose Bay expansion, the Greenland air bases, and particularly the Arctic weather stations were now critical. Construction proceeded ahead with

haste.⁴⁴ The USAAF also utilized and re-equipped many existing Canadian and Danish facilities. The Danes proved exceptionally cooperative, but communications problems arose with Canadians over differences in British codes and procedures. Eventually, all planes were fitted with specially designed equipment and became part of a regular weather patrol.⁴⁵

There were other problems at Goose Bay. Despite American concerns that joint operation of the base would be unworkable, the Canadian government had proceeded ahead and by December 1941 had completed a gravel runway, hangers, barracks, and warehouses.⁴⁶ Two additional runways were added in the spring. American airmen in transit complained bitterly about intolerable conditions, claiming that accommodations were cramped, the quality of the food poor, and the runway facilities inadequate. As one pilot argued, "the Labrador base is a hellhole with slimy chuck, knotty beds, and an enemy squadron of 109's disguised as mosquitoes."⁴⁷ For the American commanders, morale was a top priority. As a result, they pressured and were granted approval to construct "an entirely separate establishment" across from the RCAF base. In addition to building barracks, mess halls, officers' quarters, radio/weather huts, warehouses, and hangers, they also expanded and surfaced the landing strip with asphalt. In the end, there would be two bases at Goose Bay, under separate commands, but sharing the same runways and air space.⁴⁸

In the summer of 1942, a convoy of cargo ships and trawlers carrying men, equipment, and supplies set out for Fort Chimo, Frobisher Bay, and Southampton Island. Dr. Alexander Forbes, now commissioned as a lieutenant colonel in the USAAF, along with veteran Arctic explorer Capt. Bob Bartlett,⁴⁹ was sent on ahead to chart the waters of Frobisher Bay and to pilot the supply ships safely to the base site. Aboard Bartlett's legendary schooner, the *Effie M. Morrissey*, they arrived at their destination in mid-July. Their first task was to assist in transferring the men and equipment of the temporary station on Crowell Island to its permanent location near the mouth of the Sylvia Grinnell River, a site chosen by Lt. Col. Charles Hubbard. Formerly attached to the U.S. Navy, Hubbard had been transferred to the USAAF Weather Service and put in charge of the mission. The supply fleet was delayed, however, when a German U-Boat sunk one of the cargo ships carrying 6,000 tons of equipment and supplies off the shore of Labrador, but it finally arrived in August, carrying 350 men, building materials, and heavy construction equipment. By October, a prefabricated village had been erected, including barracks, officers' quarters, a hospital, a general store, a mess hall, generator stations, assorted hangers, and warehouse facilities, all seemingly held together with a mass of power lines. When the *Morrissey* made its final departure from the harbour, the bulldozers were already hard at work clearing the runway.⁵⁰

The Crimson Route was abandoned after the small fighter planes were refitted with larger fuel tanks, but expansion of the Frobisher base continued through 1943, giving rise to suspicions in Ottawa that the Crystal airfields were built primarily for postwar American commercial aviation. On an inspection tour in 1944, the British High Commissioner reported that the Frobisher airfield was maintained by a staff of eighty military [personnel] and a few civilians, in accommodations built to house 800. There were now two runways, one of which was asphalt, and a large hanger which doubled as a badminton court and gym. Basic facilities included officers' quarters, barracks, mess halls, kitchens, and a twenty-five-bed hospital with a dental office, a modern operating room, and an x-ray machine. But there were also shops, a theatre, and a coffee house, and for personal comforts, a barber shop, laundry, and Turkish bath.⁵¹ A year later, a U.S. Coast Guard supply ship reported far fewer men on base, but that local "Eskimos" had expressed concern that these men were hiding in the Arctic and leaving their women and children at home to fight the war.⁵²

The Crystal I weather station at Fort Chimo was expanded into a full-size air base in the summers of 1942 and 1943, to include two asphalt runways, numerous hangers and warehouses, a myriad of housing facilities to accommodate 700, and a hotel for visitors. Problems were apparent during the initial construction of the weather station, when it was discovered that the initial survey had failed to consider the effect of the twenty-five-foot tidewater on the rapids some three miles below the site. Instead of moving the base, the boat anchorage was safely, but inconveniently, relocated some four miles downriver. Nevertheless, ships and tugs still ran aground on the shallow, rocky bottom.⁵³ Like Crystal II in Frobisher Bay, the airfield was rarely used, and by the summer of 1944, there were only 155 American military [personnel] and civilians on site.⁵⁴ A Canadian scientist arriving in 1946 was overwhelmed by the size and extravagance and remarked upon "the hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of equipment in place." He described the base itself as stretching two and a half miles along the shore and a mile deep, with wide roads, full airfield facilities, numerous cars and trucks, telephone and electricity, rows of huts and barracks, and a block of administration buildings set on a square. The large leather chairs in the hotel reminded him of what one might expect in a senior common room at Oxford.⁵⁵

Construction at Coral Harbour on Southampton Island, at The Pas, and at Churchill also began in the summer of 1942, providing facilities similar to but smaller than those at Frobisher and Chimo. There was only one runway at Churchill, but it was longer, wider, and made of concrete, whereas the base facilities were larger with accommodations for over 1,500. The runways on Southampton Island were similar to Frobisher, but there were just a nose hanger

and accommodations for only 500. At The Pas in Manitoba, accessible by road, there were two oversized asphalt runways, one very large hanger, but accommodation for only 450 men.⁵⁶ The proposed airfield at Padloping was never built because of poor terrain, susceptibility to coastal fogs, and water access that was limited to only six weeks annually. Instead, it remained an isolated weather and communications station, serviced by ship and visited occasionally by small planes landing on the ice or by RCMP patrols.⁵⁷

In 1945, a senior officer of a U.S. Coast Guard supply ship described Padloping as a virtual “ghost town” built for 300 but manned by only a dozen officers and men. Comparing the twenty-five Quonset huts to “a razor back hog,” he reported that a row of storehouses was full of unpacked cartons of goods and equipment: Arctic clothing such as ski boots, woollen pants, parkas, and underwear; household items including dishes, blankets, kerosene lamps, and cutlery; boxes upon boxes of gumdrops, lifesavers, candy bars, mixed nuts, cigarettes, and cigars; and as an example of military excesses, sports kits containing expensive tennis racquets.⁵⁸ Apparently supplies had arrived at Padloping before the decision was made to cancel construction of an airfield.

Construction of such elaborate facilities understandably raised questions in Ottawa about American postwar intentions.⁵⁹ While it is true that the United States military was taken to task for its extravagant expenditures by the Senate inquiry headed by Harry S. Truman,⁶⁰ one might consider other factors in the debate. Perhaps coincidentally, the two abandoned air routes – one along the Mackenzie Valley and the Crimson Route – were avidly promoted by Vilhjalmur Stefansson and Sir Hubert Wilkins, respectively. Wilkins was in favour of Churchill as a base for air traffic to the west, but more importantly to the east via Spitzbergen to the Soviet Union. Stefansson argued that Norman Wells on the Mackenzie River was a better choice and favoured Wrangel Island as a steppingstone to northern Siberia. Both saw inherent postwar commercial aviation benefits from the wartime bases⁶¹ and avidly promoted the development of “great circle routes” over the North Pole. Neither gentleman mentioned Canadian sovereignty.

The North Atlantic Routes, on the other hand, were completed with the full support of Native Greenlanders and the Free Danish Legation in Washington. The Bluie W-1 base at Narsarsuaq was by far the largest of the Arctic airfields, with accommodations for several thousand people and two landing strips: one of concrete and the other made with steel mats laid on a graded foundation.⁶² The Søndre Strømfjord base, Bluie W-8, was slightly smaller but equally impressive and offered much more reliable weather conditions. Angmagssalik, Bluie E-2, was used primarily for emergency landings, search and rescue, and as a supply base for the east coast weather stations. Similar to the Canadian terms of

agreement, the Free Danish stipulated that all American installations were to be transferred to Denmark at the end of the war.⁶³ But the similarities ended there. With the mother country occupied by the Nazis, the future of Greenland was entirely dependent on the United States. There was no political opposition, only a warm welcome.

German planes were frequently sighted patrolling the Greenland coast, and it was thought they refuelled somewhere in the deep fjords. Although the U.S. Coast Guard captured twenty Nazis stationed on the east coast in 1941, German weather reports continued to be heard in the northeast. The first casualty did not occur until 1943, when a member of the Greenland Sledge Patrol was killed by a party of Germans who had attacked and destroyed their isolated station at Eskimonaes. A Nazi base and its supply ship were subsequently discovered at Sabine Island in the northeast and totally destroyed in a bombing raid from Iceland, led by Col. Balchen. Two Coast Guard cutters followed and took one remaining German as a prisoner.⁶⁴ Thus comprised the sum of enemy action on the Arctic battlefield, but Greenlanders understandably accorded the Americans a hero's welcome.

In many respects, the real war was with the environment, and to a degree, the real heroes were the search and rescue parties [who set out to find] the pilots downed on the Greenland ice cap or in the icy coastal waters. Plans in the summer of 1942 included setting up a beachhead station on Comanche Bay on the northeast coast and two ice cap stations in the interior to provide additional weather and radio communications, primarily for search and rescue operations. Col. William Carlson, who was responsible for organizing the mission, selected polar exploration veterans as leaders: Lt. Max Demorest (University of Michigan Greenland Expeditions), Capt. Alan Innes-Taylor (on two Byrd expeditions), and Dr. John W. Marr (explorations in the Hudson Bay area). The posts were barely finished when a "Flying Fortress" aircraft crashed in the vicinity, setting off a bizarre rescue mission which ended with five men dead, one disabled for life, and the remainder finally lifted off the glacier five months later.⁶⁵

This and other stories of daring rescues and miraculous survivals recounted incidents of remarkable endurance, bravery, and hardship, comparable to the traditional heroic accounts of the nineteenth-century polar expeditions and the challenging quests of Roman and Greek mythology. They bore little relevance to the war epics where hundreds were lost in single battles. In the Arctic, the enemy was the environment – the isolation, cold, snow, and ice. Victory was survival. Overall, the success rate of the rescue missions was quite extraordinary. While sixteen planes were known to have crashed on the Greenland ice cap from 1941 through 1945, only eight men were lost. Those coming down over Labrador were less fortunate. The men volunteering for the rescues were usually seasoned

experts, dedicated, fearless, and ready to risk their own lives to save others – only one search plane was wrecked, but five men died attempting rescues.⁶⁶ There were also similarities to Australian “mateship” involved. As described by Maj. Oliver La Farge, historian for the Air Transport Command, “Out of it all comes a picture of the risks men will run to save their fellows, and a story of sacrifice, suffering, endurance, and intense good-fellowship which for all its tragic aspects gives lift to the heart.”⁶⁷ Membership in the elite polar fraternity involved selflessness, ingenuity, outstanding courage, and the ability to thrive on hardship and discomfort.

At the remote weather stations, it was a dreary, monotonous, lonely life, spent in cold wooden buildings with the radio as the only contact with the outside world. In Greenland, the base personnel and pilots had to deal with hurricane-force Foehn winds and dust storms, unpredictable ice conditions, and sea fogs. But it was the frigid cold that created the most serious challenge, mentally and physically. Even after years of experience, Col. Balchen was acutely aware of the danger:

There is an awesome quality in that quiet, intense cold. You step outdoors and your rubber-lined trench coat freezes stiff as a board before you can shut the door. You feel your face wither in a matter of seconds, as though it had been seared by a flame. A white dot on your forehead foretells a week of agony; a deep breath will shrivel your lungs.... The danger dogs your every footstep, trailing unseen on silent pads, waiting for you to stumble and fall. You hear it in the dry squeak of snow under your heel, the rumble and boom of the shore ice, the occasional rifle-like explosion of a chunk of frozen cordwood.⁶⁸

Crucial to survival was high morale, and Balchen had long since learned how to defeat the boredom and monotony. His men were encouraged to take part in all manner of sports: boxing, skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, hunting, fishing, dog sledding, football, and even falconry. When winter darkness set in, there was a large library, movies, games, puzzles, pets of all sorts, Christmas decorations, and even a barber shop quartet. Yet according to William Carlson, the response to the Arctic varied with the individual. “Some hated the place, others didn’t mind it, a few really liked it. Some found it adventurous and exciting, others thought it dull, dreary, and unbearably monotonous. A few simply couldn’t take it.”⁶⁹ The mystique of the Arctic carried with it some harsh realities, but those who thrived on it would return.

The North Atlantic Ferry Route proved to be an unqualified success. Its first major test came in 1942 with “Operation Bolero,” the ferrying of the Eighth Air Command’s planes to Prestwick in Scotland. The inaugural flights were not promising. While most of the four-engine cargo planes and bombers flew straight

from Newfoundland to Prestwick, a few were designated to fly in convoy with the smaller fighter planes, stopping to refuel at Greenland and Iceland. On the first test flight, eighteen bombers (Flying Fortresses) left Newfoundland in June 1942; seven arrived at Narsarsuaq as planned; one landed at Søndre Strømfjord; three came down along the coast of Greenland; and seven returned to Goose Bay. The next month, another six fighters (Lightnings) and two bombers (Flying Fortresses) came down on the Greenland ice cap. Yet in both instances, there was no loss of life. By the end of 1942, the planes downed amounted to just over four percent. In 1943, the average dropped to a little more than one percent for the over 3,000 USAAF planes flying across the North Atlantic. In 1944, the total number of flights increased to over almost 6,000.⁷⁰ The men who had designed and built the route had reason to celebrate. They had challenged the Arctic and conquered. Some believed their work had only just begun:

it was an important war for the knowledge of the Arctic that we gained.... Some day our whole conception of geography will be changed; the earth itself will be rolled over on its side, and the spindle of the globe will run, not from Pole to Pole, but from one side of the Equator to the other. Then the Arctic will be the very center of our new world; and across Greenland and northern Canada and Alaska will run the commercial airways from New York to London, from San Francisco to Moscow to India.⁷¹

This optimism pervaded the thoughts and ambitions of many Arctic aviators, with implications for the decades ahead.

Politically and militarily, a somewhat parallel situation occurred in the northwest, although the environment of the Subarctic created subtle differences in response. The presence of trees may have created a psychological illusion of shelter; the denser local population and greater number of Americans certainly reduced the feeling of isolation, as did optional access routes along roads and rivers. In many respects, the northwestern frontier was far more American than the High Arctic. Canada merely provided a land bridge from the mainland United States to its Alaska territory. The similarities of the situation were more in process and procedures.

On the recommendation of the PJBD in 1940, the Canadian government expanded and upgraded the airfields of the Yukon Southern Airways, a commercial route stretching from Edmonton to Fairbanks. The initial purpose was to facilitate movement of troops and supplies to Alaska; later it would be used to send Lend-Lease planes to Russia. After Pearl Harbor, the United States sought further improvements to what was now called the Northwest Staging Route and submitted numerous requests for major highway construction, oil pipelines, weather and communication stations, and a wide variety of related

projects, all of which were far beyond Canada's financial or manpower capacity to provide. In spite of concerns for sovereignty, Ottawa had little choice but to allow the Americans to proceed at their own expense, but with written guarantees that the facilities would revert to Canadian control at the end of the war. Additional airfields were built along the Mackenzie Valley, initially without Ottawa's approval.⁷² These fields were deemed necessary to supply the Canol oil pipeline project based at Norman Wells, but later requests called for extension of the route to provide a secondary airway to Alaska, based on American estimates that the Lend-Lease agreement with the Soviet Union might involve up to 60,000 flights. As it happened, the yearly average was only about 4,500.⁷³ As occurred with the Crimson Route, the Mackenzie Route would be partially completed but never used for ferrying planes. Yet like the North Atlantic Route, the Northwest Staging Route, or "Alsib" line, effectively fulfilled its purpose in flying American troops, supplies, and Lend-Lease planes to Alaska.

Weather also had an adverse effect on activities in the Pacific Northwest, so much so that it may have been responsible for the relative inactivity in that theatre. Here, too, the demand for accuracy in weather prediction became almost an obsession. If the American pilots distrusted British weather reports in the northeast, they were equally critical of the Canadian Department of Transport's manner of operation in the northwest. In the end, the 16th Weather Squadron (U.S.) was established to cover Alaska and the Canadian west coast.⁷⁴

Despite the advice of polar experts, the administrative officers in Washington often displayed ignorance of conditions in both regions, a fact that frequently resulted in excessive waste and expenditure on "grand scale" projects. The pipeline from Norman Wells to Whitehorse was perhaps more costly for its fifteen months of operation, but equally ill-planned was the scheme to transport miners from Michigan to Narsarsuaq in Greenland, in order to drive a tunnel in a mountain for the storage of dynamite and bombs. In the end, the storage cave was never used because of heavy moisture build-up. Numerous other administrative foul-ups occurred, resulting in oversupply or shortages, such as the arrival of two modern refrigerators in January to a Greenland base where the men were in desperate need of adequate Arctic clothing.⁷⁵

Tales in the northwest recounted equally bizarre incidents. But one officer believed that much of the lore was, at best, gross exaggeration.

Tales of suffering and breath-taking escape, which rival in magnitude the chronicles of all the ancient explorers, are the regular and natural talk of men who work up north, whether they pilot airplanes or swing axes along the Alaska Highway.... What is fundamentally an interesting and truthful, though frequently inconsequential anecdote, more often than not becomes a moral for the uninitiated, a saga of hardship, a warning to the stranger of dangers which surround the storyteller's life.

This kind of word-of-mouth epic is the literature of the campfire. It has existed since the beginning and will exist as long as men are far from home and are alone, whether on pounding seas, a burning beach or a windless sweep of ice.⁷⁶

There may be truth in this analysis, but one must consider the American tradition of romanticizing the frontier adventure, whether it be the Klondike Gold Rush or taming the Wild West. The idealism lies in both the teller and listener of such tales. And those who wrote about their experiences in articles and books merely reinforced the mystique to inspire yet another generation to take up the challenge. This time they would be scientists, engineers, meteorologists, radio technicians, aviators, and military strategists. Their finest hours would be in the years ahead, and the depths of their ingenuity would be unparalleled.

Part II – The Postwar Years

During the Second World War, the United States' need for efficiency resulted in more centralized organization of military and civilian operations, particularly in the Arctic. As meteorology increased in importance, control would be centred in the newly created USAAF Weather Service, which was given command status. Similarly, the Air Signal Corps would be incorporated into the Air Communications Service, and the Ferry Command into the Air Transport Command (ATC).¹ All three maintained close functional relations and would eventually be combined under the ATC after the war. Because of its dependency on civilian pilots and non-combat role, the ATC was often referred to, affectionately or critically, as the Army of Terrified Civilians or simply Allergic to Combat.² The war fought in the Arctic was a particularly benign battle, where one did not become disillusioned with senseless killings and atrocities. Here, men could attain honour without guilt, thus adding to the attraction.

Academia, which had provided a cadre of advisors, soon became the recipient of military funding for research and special courses. To meet the task of training meteorologists, the USAAF had selected five universities, including the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, to train young science or engineering graduates in advanced weather forecasting techniques and radio communications. In 1940, there were roughly 400 qualified officers and enlisted men enrolled. Five years later, the enrolment totalled nearly 6,200. The Weather Service had over-estimated its needs, with the result that by the end of the war there were 1,800 newly trained, unemployed graduates, creating a reserve pool of qualified meteorologists. A similar situation occurred with radar technicians and radio operators. Other courses were sponsored by the National Defense Research Committee and later the Office of Scientific Research and Development. Waging war in an Arctic environment required new training

programs in survival techniques, new clothing and equipment, specially designed buildings, and new ways of servicing machines and vehicles. In response, the USAAF set up various research and training facilities, including an experimental station at Fairbanks, a cold-weather training centre at Buckley Field in Colorado, and the Mountain Warfare Training Center at Camp Echo, also in Colorado.³ War in the Arctic had created massive research projects, new equipment and technologies, more trained men, and greatly expanded budgets. From an American perspective, it was only logical their work should be utilized in peacetime.

A number of polar scientists began discussing the concept of an Arctic information and research centre. The concept was expanded to cover other areas of extreme climate, resulting in the establishment of the Arctic, Desert, and Tropic Information Center (ADTIC), reporting to the USAAF's Proving Ground Command. With the help of Dr. William Carlson, who would later become its chief, a number of respected polar scientists were recruited for the Arctic Division, including Dr. Laurence Gould, Lt. Carl Eklund, Lt. Lincoln Washburn, Dr. John W. Marr, Maj. Walter A. Wood, and Maj. Richard Flint. Even Vilhjalmur Stefansson was hired for a short time at the princely salary of \$3,500 a month. In addition to collecting information, the ADTIC produced new maps, survival manuals, and a number of important studies on operational techniques. The centre was deactivated in 1945 but resurrected two years later to further the United States Air Force's (USAF) research needs in peacetime defence.⁴

If 1943 marked a turning point in the war, it was also a year of political reassessment, when leaders in both Canada and the United States began to think in terms of the potential benefits that might be derived from wartime construction. When it was rumoured that the Truman Committee would recommend that the United States seek postwar benefits from wartime oil and airfield investments, Canadian officials moved quickly to protect its economic independence. Hence, in December 1943, Ottawa announced that the United States would be reimbursed for the costs of all permanent military installations on Canadian soil. Based on agreements signed in 1944 and 1946, Canada paid over \$123.5 million for twenty-eight airfields, fifty-six weather stations, and other permanent facilities. For the eastern Arctic air bases, the total amounted to just over \$71 million, a far cry from the cost estimate of \$200 million in 1942.⁵ Because of the wartime agreements guaranteeing transfer of control at the end of hostilities, the United States had no recourse but to accept payment. Reportedly, there was disappointment and even deep resentment in some quarters.⁶

For some capitalists, it meant the end of a dream – the vision of the great circle routes over the North Pole, connecting major U.S. cities with those of

northern Europe and Asia – as they did not believe Canada had the manpower, money, technology, or initiative to develop the route. America's business magazine, *Fortune*, took a pragmatic view. Noting that the agreements to build the Arctic airfields and weather stations might have been considered a diplomatic coup, the author went on to suggest that because of the recent Canadian purchases, the United States may have to bow out of the North Atlantic unless a plane could be designed to fly direct from New York to Britain.⁷ Which, of course, is exactly what transpired.

The Pentagon would be less willing to accept an end to its role in the Arctic. Before the war had ended, American military planners were pressing for peacetime continuation of the ABC-22 agreement on Canadian-United States joint defence. Behind the basic strategy lay the USAAF's ambitious scheme involving a network of weather stations, radio communications, and airfields spread across the Arctic from Alaska to Greenland.⁸ The weather plans, however, took on a quasi-civilian character when Lt. Col. Charles Hubbard left the USAAF early in 1945 to join the U.S. Weather Bureau in Washington, where he was rumoured to be actively lobbying politicians on the idea of Arctic weather and research stations.⁹

Behind Hubbard's initiative was a study by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology that had been initiated by the Board for National Security with support from the heads of the United States Army and Navy. The purpose of the Arctops Project was to conduct studies in specialized techniques, equipment, and supplies as required for the establishment and maintenance of meteorological and scientific research stations in high-latitude Arctic areas. The report also suggested that what had been once a domain of pure science or an explorer's adventure had become an engineer's specialty. Although the short-term objective was concerned only with the solution of basic problems and the preparation of reliable plans, the long-term goal was to develop a permanent network of sophisticated scientific stations and weather outposts throughout the American Arctic. These would be established and maintained by air and would form the basis for future development of great circle transpolar flyways. The long-range plan would first require United States authority, before gaining cooperation from Denmark and Canada. Almost as an afterthought, it was admitted that these approvals would be essential since these latter governments controlled the majority of the landmass under consideration.¹⁰ The apparent logic of the argument appeared on the attached map, which showed massive numbers of weather stations in the Soviet Union. Based on this study and apparently undaunted by the Canadian purchase of the wartime facilities, Hubbard began to plan a civilian network of weather stations. Specific locations and uses would be determined by similar studies conducted by the Air Coordinating Committee of the USAAF.¹¹

Meanwhile, a bill authorizing construction of joint Canadian-American Arctic weather stations was introduced to the United States Senate on 21 March 1945 and finally passed Congress on 12 February 1946. Within two months, Hubbard was ready for immediate implementation, having compiled detailed specifications of buildings, transport requirements, operational timetables, and even lists of personnel. The outline of operations appeared much more military-oriented than the civilian proposal presented to Congress. Not only were plans dependent on the use of USAF planes and personnel and assistance from the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard, but it was anticipated from the outset that the military would be the major source of men and supplies. Moreover, the military was to have the final decision on priorities and alternative arrangements. As explained by Hubbard, it seems probable that the considerations of national security that lay behind the authorization for an Arctic weather network were of more immediate concern than the procurement of meteorological data for civilian purposes.¹²

The first objective in the spring of 1946 was to undertake reconnaissance flights and exploration, then to establish a base in the western Arctic, on Banks or Melville Island, and finally, to set up a fuel cache and aviation facilities at Thule, on the northwest coast of Greenland. Rapid accomplishment was desired for reasons of economy, available funds, and military interests. Further stations on Prince Patrick Island and northern Ellesmere Island were scheduled for 1947.

In the more detailed operating plans, Hubbard stated that the Weather Bureau alone could not justify construction of land air strips but referred to military plans for Arctic development under which such plans would follow. The plans also recommended the need for intensive scientific studies and the creation of an advisory council to approve and coordinate all private research. The report noted that proposed weather posts on Wrangel Island and at Spitzbergen might be delayed pending the outcome of negotiations with Russia and Norway, but that Canada and Denmark should be approached immediately for approvals.¹³ Ironically, while the Danes proved most cooperative, the most frustrating delays occurred in negotiations with Canada.

Initially, Hubbard had recommended that the entire responsibility for the project should rest with the United States in view of the preponderance of American transport aircraft, ownership of substantial icebreakers, and the surpluses of American supplies, and because the enterprise was closely related to military plans for Arctic defence facilities. Since the United States would ultimately accrue the most benefit, he believed that it was most desirable that the weather network should also be American. Believing that any participatory interest Ottawa might have was simply a matter of national prestige, Hubbard suggested that Canadians be encouraged to confine their efforts to maximizing

their existing facilities, although he thought it might be possible to employ some Canadian personnel, and Canadian bush pilots for special phases of the operation. He did suggest that sufficient guarantees might be offered to cover Canadian concerns for sovereignty and national aviation, but warned that even if Ottawa wished to participate in the initial phase, future plans were such that it was doubtful if government would be in a position (presumably financial) to participate in the long-term expansion.¹⁴ On paper, Hubbard's arguments sounded logical from an American viewpoint, but he greatly misunderstood the Canadian desire for involvement. It was far more than a matter of national prestige.

Members of Canada's Cabinet Defence Committee were deeply concerned about the political and sovereignty implications of the proposed Joint Security Plan presented in January 1946, particularly the Air Annex involving the Arctic airfields and related support systems.¹⁵ Because of its expressed civilian nature, the U.S. Weather Bureau's proposal was submitted directly to the Canadian government, while segments of the broader plan, including the continued operation of Arctic airfields, remobilization of the Goose Bay base, extension of the Loran program, and military exercises, were all channelled through the Permanent Joint Board on Defence. They were subsequently approved, with the aerial reconnaissance (Operation Polaris) and naval expeditions (Task Force 68) subject to restricted publicity.¹⁶

Two weeks after the submission of the weather station proposal on 1 May 1946, Charles Hubbard arrived in Ottawa to meet with senior government and military officials for discussion of the plans. By this time, Denmark had indicated willingness to cooperate, thus slightly altering the original strategy. Instead of one, two stations would be approved for construction in 1946, the first at Thule, and the other on Melville Island in the central Canadian Arctic. Three satellite stations were scheduled for the following year: on Banks Island, on Prince Patrick Island, and on either the west side of Ellesmere Island or on Axel Heiberg. The meeting lasted two hours, with the Canadian representatives involved in a further hour of discussion about the sovereignty implications. During the latter debate, most agreed that the stations should at least be manned and operated by Canadians, despite the warning by Andrew Thomson of the Canadian Meteorological Service that there was a serious lack of qualified Canadians.¹⁷

Canadian officials were particularly reluctant to approve the plan after viewing a secret document of the U.S. Air Coordinating Committee (ACC) that had suggested the possibility of establishing claims to undiscovered islands in the region north of Prince Patrick Island and west of Grant's Land, and the use of the USAF Polaris flights to look for possible evidence of such lands. The report also recommended that the ACC consult with the State Department as to

whether the United States government would support such a claim if already occupied by an American-operated weather station.¹⁸ Study of the report by various departments of the Canadian government brought mixed reactions, although all expressed concern. A lengthy report from the Department of National Defence warned that Canada could

no longer reasonably expect to maintain her Arctic territories in state of vacuum, and hope at the same time to preserve her sovereignty over them in absentia.... [She] must now either herself provide essential facilities and services in her Arctic territories or provide them cooperatively, or abandon almost all substantial basis to her claims upon them.¹⁹

The report went on to recommend that full title and control should be retained by Canada, that this fact should be well publicized, and that a majority of the personnel employed should be Canadian. There was also concern that refusal to cooperate might encourage the United States to claim some of the uninhabited islands as its own territory by right of occupation.²⁰

On 28 June 1946, the Canadian Cabinet announced that it would defer any decision on the Joint Arctic Weather Station program for a year to allow time to consider the request in context with overall North American defence proposals. The U.S. Chiefs of Staff and Intelligence Service immediately called a meeting with Prime Minister King and several key officials to explain the vulnerability of the Canadian Arctic and the Soviets' nuclear potential. After learning the full details and the extraordinary costs involved in preparing an adequate defence, Mackenzie King came to the bitter conclusion that Canada could simply not do what was necessary to protect itself. He also feared that unless the United States and Britain remained closely united in defence of the western world, Canada would become a mere pawn in the world conflict.²¹ Yet for the moment, he remained firm on the question of delaying a final decision on the weather station proposal.

Hubbard's frustration mounted, as equipment and supplies had already been loaded on USN ships and their departure delayed pending Canada's approval.²² All other necessary clearances had been approved by the Canadian government, including USAF (formerly USAAF) flights between Alaska and Iceland (Operation Polaris); the re-opening or continued operation of existing Arctic weather stations; retained USAF control of the airfields at Mingan, Chimo, and Frobisher; expansion of the Loran program; and USN reconnaissance and scientific explorations utilizing marine landing parties and aircraft (Task Force 68 – Operation Nanook).²³ Assuming Canada's eventual approval, he decided to cache the extra stores at the new Thule weather station and to carry out more extensive site surveys in the Archipelago.

The USN Task Force 68, comprised of two cargo ships, an aircraft tender, three long-range flying boats, an icebreaker, and an ice-strengthened survey ship, arrived in North Star Bay on 22 July 1946. A large valley on Wolstenholme Bay was selected because of its deep harbour and excellent landing field sites, as well as its separation from the nearby Inuit village by hills and cliffs. The ubiquitous Charles Hubbard was on location to direct the operations. Navy personnel and construction crews worked together to unload and erect the USN Quonset huts and Army pre-cut barracks, while the U.S. Army Engineers prepared an emergency landing field. The eleven members of the U.S. Weather Bureau assigned to the new station were joined later by eleven Danes, who brought their own buildings and supplies but no meteorological equipment. The official in charge of the Thule station was Edward Goodale, who had previously worked under Hubbard in setting up the facilities on Padloping Island during the war. The USN Task Force then escorted Hubbard on an extensive reconnaissance, by ship and air, of 'Pearyland' and the outer islands of the Archipelago. Despite shortages of building material, the entire mission was completed by September 9th, at which time Hubbard returned to Washington.²⁴

Perhaps influenced by American plans and with their budgets still intact, the Canadian Armed Forces were also active in the Arctic that year. Beginning in February, the Army carried out an extensive overland expedition, Operation Musk Ox, to test clothing and equipment. The long trek originated at Churchill and circled to the northwest via Baker Lake, Victoria Island, the Coppermine, then south to Great Bear Lake, and finally arriving at Fort Nelson in May. The entire operation involved about 400 men and was estimated to have cost millions. The actual participants on the trek, however, numbered less than fifty and involved only ten vehicles – DC 6 tractors, American Studebaker M-29 Weasels, and Canadian armoured snowmobiles.²⁵ Of perhaps greater significance was the extensive RCAF aerial reconnaissance that summer, photographing an area covering 402 square miles of the Canadian Arctic while carrying out numerous search and rescue exercises to establish a wide-ranging Canadian presence.²⁶ There was no official report of finding previously undiscovered islands.

The question of a commitment to a joint defence agreement remained unresolved that fall. With Canada's large size, small population, and limited financial resources, the risks attached to military dependency upon a powerful neighbour at times seemed much greater than the possibility of an enemy attack from the north. In the words of a former Canadian diplomat, the late John Holmes, Canada has one overwhelming problem that the United States does not have: that of living beside a superpower.²⁷ The American military strategists had a much different perspective and little understanding of Canadian sensitivities about sovereignty. In their view, if Canada was unable to adequately defend the

Arctic, surely the government would be grateful for U.S. protection. It was simply a matter of logic and necessity.²⁸ They had no particular wish to own the land; they just wanted use of it, exclusively if possible. If refused permission, perhaps there were unclaimed islands that could be occupied for the purpose.

The USAF Intelligence Service was called upon to report on the Canadian problem, with specific reference to the legality of Canada's sovereign claims to Prince Patrick Island, Melville Island, and Grant's Land (northern Ellesmere). The report warned that based on precedence, Canadian jurisdiction over the entire Archipelago would likely be sustained in an international court of law, but it suggested that the United States could present a fairly well-documented legal defence in support of any action its government wished to take in regards to uninhabited islands. While emphasizing the grave political implications of any action that could be interpreted as an usurpation of Canadian territorial rights, the report went on to suggest that it did not follow that this country would be compelled to remain idle if it seemed probable that penetration of this area was threatened by a potential enemy. More importantly, it concluded that the immediate objective would be to gain Canada's full cooperation by assurance that the United States had no intention, then or in the future, of claiming sovereignty over any section of the Canadian Arctic.²⁹ For the American military, the prospect of leaving the Arctic unprotected until hostilities appeared inevitable was unthinkable, particularly with the events leading to World War II still vivid in memory. Much of the Archipelago was unknown territory; research, mapping, and surveys had to be carried out; Arctic equipment had to be developed and tested; and large numbers of men had to be trained in the techniques of Arctic warfare. An all-out effort was needed to gain Canada's cooperation, even if it meant delaying plans for an offensive base as set out in the Air Annex.³⁰

Understandably, the U.S. High Command was willing to offer assurances that it in no way wished to infringe on Canadian sovereignty,³¹ but the State Department was not prepared to discuss the sovereignty issue in formal negotiations, lest it might lead to an attempt to obtain United States acceptance of the Sector Principle.³² Legal experts in Canada's External Affairs Department were of the same mind, albeit for different reasons, and recommended that officials avoid any dispute over the validity of the Sector Theory until the Archipelago was fully occupied.³³

In late October, Prime Minister Mackenzie King and President Harry Truman met at the White House to discuss the future defence of North America. The president stressed the importance of an adequate continental defence system, with specific reference to the weather station proposal and what might be done for several purposes without mention of boundaries. The prime minister expressed his concerns about potential criticism from the Soviets and was

unusually open in his concern about sovereignty and public perception. The two heads of state essentially agreed to proceed with final negotiations, but on a diplomatic level as opposed to military.³⁴ Had King wished to continue the policy of paying for all defence facilities on Canadian soil, the timing could not have been worse. There was only one way to fund the social welfare measures promised in the 1945 election and that was through cuts in military spending.³⁵ It was equally likely that the Americans were aware of the situation.

Political negotiations followed, with agreement on the terms finalized on 17 December 1946 and formally announced on 12 February 1947. It was also agreed in confidence that initial phases of defence preparation would be carried out, where possible, under civilian cover, including the weather stations, Loran, reconnaissance, and various research projects.³⁶ As before, specific approvals, if required, would be forwarded through the PJBD. For military strategists in the Pentagon, it would be the first hurdle of many in the years to come, but it was the most important. Both countries knew it would be virtually impossible to reverse the agreement, as acknowledged by Gen. Charles Foulkes, former chairman of the Canadian chiefs of staff, when he stated that the decision for joint air defence was taken in 1946, not 1958, as some critics claim when discussing the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD).³⁷

Meanwhile, on 28 January 1947, the Canadian Cabinet finally approved the Joint Arctic Weather Station program, which was to take place over three years and include nine stations. The proposed station on Banks Island was removed from the priority list, as were plans to enlarge supply facilities along the Mackenzie Valley airway. Finding Newfoundland and Greenland more cooperative, the U.S. Weather Bureau instead planned to use Goose Bay and Thule as supply bases. Canada agreed to pay all costs of permanent facilities and to supply half the staffs.³⁸ There was no formal exchange of notes. Instead, arrangements would be agreed on at the beginning of each year.³⁹ Officially, the officer in charge was a Canadian, but in practice, there was always an American executive officer. Charles Hubbard personally organized and supervised the construction, maintenance, and supply of all stations, in cooperation with the U.S. Navy and U.S. Air Force.⁴⁰

Once Canadian approval for the weather station program was granted, plans went into effect immediately. In April, the stores and equipment cached at Thule were airlifted to the west coast of Ellesmere Island. The first postwar weather station on Canadian soil would be located at Eureka and completed within weeks, although USAF engineers continued work on a rough landing strip. As per the agreement, there were four Canadians and four Americans assigned to the station.⁴¹ That summer, Hubbard once again joined USN Task Force 68, this time comprised of USS *Wyandot*, USS *Whitewood*, and icebreaker USCGC

Edisto. The first assignment was to resupply Thule and Eureka, then build a new station and airstrip at Winter Harbour on Melville Island before setting up an automatic weather station near Dundas Harbour. When heavy ice conditions prevented the Task Force from reaching Melville Island, Hubbard wasted little time in selecting an alternate site on Cornwallis Island.

The supply ships finally arrived at Resolute at the end of August, and within two weeks almost 300 tons of supplies and heavy machinery were unloaded and construction was underway on both the buildings and airfield. For the first time, three Canadian observers joined the over a hundred American officers, enlisted men, and construction workers. Another first was the use of three Canadian prefabricated wooden buildings to house the regular staff and equipment. The Americans supplied five Quonset huts, two Jamesways, the construction vehicles, equipment, as well as all technical apparatuses and supplies for weather and radio communications. Although Resolute was a second choice, it proved to be an excellent site and along with Thule would become a major centre of operations for supplying the satellite stations.⁴²

The successful construction of Eureka by airlift prompted similar plans in 1948, for Mould Bay on Prince Patrick Island and for Isachsen just west of Ellef Ringnes. Additional sites were explored, then rejected for reasons of cost, inaccessibility, or doubts about available Canadian personnel.⁴³ Air reconnaissance began early that spring, followed by the arrival of men and equipment. The two stations were completed before summer. This time, with the assistance of two icebreakers – USCGC *Edisto* and USCGC *Eastwind* – each carrying two helicopters, USN Task Force 80 had hoped to supply all four stations and select two more sites – that is, until ice damage to USCGC *Edisto* forced a change of plans. After choosing a promising location at the northernmost tip of Ellesmere Island, construction supplies were cached, then additional supplies unloaded at Eureka and Resolute Bay. Mould Bay and Isachsen were supplied later by air.⁴⁴

Meanwhile, there was growing concern among Canadian officials about the increasing number of American military [personnel] in the Canadian Arctic. When asked if the wartime weather stations continuing under American control were still operated by military personnel, rather than civilians as requested, the USAF reluctantly admitted this provision had not been fulfilled. The stations in question included those at Padloping Island, Clyde River, Arctic Bay, and Frobisher Bay in the Northwest Territories, as well as Chimo, Mingan, Indian House, and Mecatina in northern Quebec.⁴⁵ When notified of Canadian plans to gradually take over these stations, Maj. Gen. Guy Henry expressed surprise and doubted whether Canada would be able to supply adequately trained meteorologists. Although worded tactfully, the response clearly indicated that the

USAF would have preferred to carry on without Canada's assistance.⁴⁶ The situation differed slightly at Goose Bay, where the RCAF officially operated the air base, but with upwards of 500 USAF officers and men remaining by permission of the Newfoundland government.⁴⁷ Newfoundland had yet to join Canada.

Although the USAF appeared reluctant to hand over control of the eastern Arctic bases, again it had no other option because of the agreements signed in 1944 and 1946. For Canada, it was a struggle to meet the costs and personnel requirements while maintaining a limited military budget. The alternative was to rely as much as possible on civilian agencies such as the Department of Transport or Mines and Resources, a strategy that also avoided potential public criticism about increasing militarization of the Arctic.⁴⁸

During the summer of 1949, bad weather, the loss of USCGC *Eastwind* due to fire, and a shortage of available manpower, supplies, and aircraft brought a temporary halt to the expansion of the weather station program. Even then, heavy ice conditions prevented the naval task force from supplying the existing stations at Eureka, Mould Bay, and Isachsen; instead, the supplies were unloaded at Resolute and distributed by air.⁴⁹ Otherwise, the operations of the new weather stations were running smoothly, with no reports of problems other than minor personnel conflicts. The former sovereignty concerns faded as highly trained technicians replaced the military staff. Even the two remaining old-timers, Glenn Dyer and Ed Goodale, on Hubbard's team since the building of the Crystal and Bluie stations in 1941, were now posted to the head office in Washington. Canada's expressed concern about the [amount of] U.S. military [presence and activity] in the Arctic appeared to arouse little reaction from the usually assertive Hubbard,⁵⁰ but may have contributed to the relative inactivity that year.

But the lull was only temporary. In 1950, a more concerted effort was made in the planning and execution of the summer operations. Enthusiasm grew over a new first on the planning board: the most northerly permanent station in the world – Alert – near Cape Sheridan on the northern tip of Ellesmere Island. Building on the experience of previous years, the duties, supply specifications, and scheduling were more precisely detailed than ever for this station. In preparation that spring, the U.S. Navy began moving supplies to Greenland and Cornwallis Island, the limit of guaranteed navigation. Thule would be the base of operations for the establishment of Alert and resupply of Eureka; flights for Mould Bay and Isachsen would run out of Resolute. Now larger than the eighty-bed Thule base, Resolute could accommodate over a hundred military personnel and transients. For the first time, the RCAF announced it would participate in the airlift, reportedly in anticipation of assuming airlift responsibility at a future date. The USAF was responsible for transporting advance parties to prepare for

the arrival of summer construction and air crews. The RCAF offered to assist in transporting freight to the Resolute base, deploying thirty-three officers and eighty-eight enlisted men. The runways at all stations, whether temporary ice strips or permanent ones, first had to be cleared and made ready for the heavy cargo planes. Despite precautions, two planes would be damaged beyond repair during take-offs from Resolute. From April to mid-May, there was a total of 136 air lifts, carrying over 700 tons of cargo, in two North Stars, one C-47 (on skis), six C-54s, and two C-82s.⁵¹

The establishment of Alert created an aura of excited anticipation, even in the reports of forty-eight-year-old Charles Hubbard, now the U.S. Weather Bureau Chief. The initial landing party of three Americans and one Canadian, accompanied by the supervisory team of Hubbard, Dyer, and the USAF Project Commander, arrived at Alert on Easter Sunday, 9 April 1950. All supplies, including a tractor and two Quartermaster Corps (QMC) one-ton cargo sleds left by the reconnaissance party in 1948, were found to be in excellent condition, and thus work began immediately to prepare a landing site and temporary shelter. The site had been selected because of feasible icebreaker access, the potential for good land and ice airstrips, optimum weather observations, and the availability of fresh water. With minor adjustments in the location of the runways, the choice proved more favourable than expected. By April 20th, the landing strip was ready for the cargo planes, which began arriving, non-stop, twenty-four hours a day. Within weeks all building and housekeeping supplies, 450 drums of diesel and motor gasoline, an additional D-2 Caterpillar tractor, radio and scientific equipment, and two years' supply of food were unloaded and stored. By May 2nd, the ice airfield was considered dangerous and additional supplies would have to be dropped by parachute. By August 25th, a 4,400-foot by 150-foot smooth, hard, dry airstrip had been completed on land, with all major buildings and technical services in place and functioning.⁵² The outermost limits of the Arctic were now circled by weather stations, and more importantly, by permanent radio communications. For all intents and purposes, the exercise appeared to be an unqualified success, an extraordinary achievement for science and man in his assault against the formidable High Arctic.

But the success of the mission was never celebrated. On 31 July 1950, an RCAF Lancaster crashed at Alert while dropping supplies to the construction crew. According to reports, one of the parachutes caught in the tail assembly, causing the plane to crash and bringing instant death to its occupants. Aboard were eight Canadians and one American – Col. Charles J. Hubbard, Chief of Arctic Projects with the U.S. Weather Bureau. As if fate prevailed, even attempts to remove the bodies failed, when a Canso sent to bring them back also crashed, this time without loss of life. Thus, Charles Hubbard, who spent the last decade

of his life designing and supervising the erection of Arctic weather stations, would be buried at the site of his last achievement, the most northerly permanent post in the world.⁵³ Alert remains today, a tribute to his tireless devotion to Arctic meteorology.

Perhaps equally significant, this was the last official joint Canadian-United States weather station to be built. In time, the Alert station would be turned over to the RCAF, with radio communications gradually prioritized in importance over the meteorological functions. For the most part, future operations in Greenland and the Arctic Archipelago would be directed and controlled by United States and Canadian armed forces.

In addition to the joint weather program in 1947, the Canadian government also approved three new Loran stations, again with the understanding that American control would be transferred when trained Canadian personnel became available. This time, Canada was responsible for the buildings and their construction, with the United States supplying construction equipment, vehicles, technical equipment, and advice, as well as being in command of the airlift. The Loran technology was a wartime invention, an electronic navigational aid for pilots in unfamiliar territory. Operation Beetle was the code name for the airlift supplying the new station at Cambridge Bay on Victoria Island; Churchill was designated as the supply base. Over 400 tons of equipment and supplies were carried by fourteen USAF C-54s and two RCAF North Stars.⁵⁴

Other Loran stations were built at Kittigazuit on the eastern shore of the Mackenzie Delta, and at Sawmill Bay on Great Bear Lake. Two additional stations were located in Alaska. The equipment for the experimental system was inordinately costly. Together, the three new stations were reported to have cost well over \$50 million, with the United States paying the major portion. Then the project was abruptly cancelled in 1950, officially because the benefits did not justify the costs. Unofficially, it was reported that the new low-frequency version, which had been developed to overcome magnetic interference, proved inadequate and inaccurate.⁵⁵

In the immediate postwar years, independent polar research was relatively minimal, compared to military and government studies, and conducted primarily under the auspices of the Arctic Institute of North America. Otherwise, institutional and university funding was scarce compared to the war years. Some studies were sponsored by government agencies – in the case of Canada, under contract through various departments or the Defence Research Board. The American military, on the other hand, provided scientists with unprecedented financial support and equipment for a wide variety of research and exploration.

In 1947, the Arctic, Desert, and Tropic Information Center was reactivated to provide a research program for the USAF. Understandably, its primary focus

would be on the Arctic for the next ten, perhaps twenty, years. The earliest projects, notably Mint Julep and Ice Cube, studied glacier and sea ice for use as temporary landing fields.⁵⁶ Other experiments were carried out by the U.S. Army and Navy. The highly secret Devon Ice Cap Project in 1948, for instance, involved dynamiting the glacier and touched off urgent inquiries from nearby fur trading posts as to its purpose. A memo from the Canadian Embassy in Washington followed, suggesting that the U.S. Army should defer requesting renewal of the project until the next summer.⁵⁷

There were numerous other military studies and expeditions in the Arctic during this period, many identified by intriguing code names such as Operation Frostbite, Operation Nanook, Task Force Frigid, Task Force Williwaw, Task Force Blue Jay, Exercise Firestep, Project Ski Jump, Project Icicle, and Project Snowman.⁵⁸ Some were conducted annually, such as the USN Task Force expeditions and USAF weather reconnaissance or Ptarmigan flights.⁵⁹ By comparison, the Canadian Army Corps operated only one radio station in the High Arctic, at Cambridge Bay on the southern shore of Victoria Island.⁶⁰ And while Canadian Army or Army Service Corps exercises also took place during those years – Operation Musk Ox in 1946, Exercise Moccasin in 1947-1948, and Exercise Sigloo, Exercise Sun Dog I, and Operation Ennadai in 1948-1961 – they tended to focus on equipment testing and survival techniques, and did not involve great numbers of men, ships, or planes. By contrast, some American military exercises were massive: the U.S. Army Task Force Frigid near Fairbanks, Alaska, in 1947 involved some 1,500 officers and men;⁶² the USN Operation Micowex off the Alaskan coast, in February 1949, with 18,000 officers and men, thirty ships, two aircraft carriers, fifty-nine airplanes, and two helicopters;⁶³ and Exercise Firestep in April 1951 involving over 1,000 men of the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne Division with help from the USAF and U.S. Army.⁶⁴

If United States military exercises were held on or over Canadian territory, Ottawa requested that observers be invited. Press releases to the Canadian media would always note the presence of observers, or sometimes merely indicate Canadian participation. Not until February 1950 and Exercise Sweetbriar along the Alaska-Yukon border did Canadian and American forces participate in a sizable combined effort. In this instance, over 5,000 men were involved, almost half Canadian, utilizing 978 motor vehicles and a hundred airplanes. According to Dr. O.M. Solandt of Canada's Defence Research Board, Sweetbriar not only allowed for the testing of the latest equipment and technologies, but it also provided a most important opportunity for gaining experience in joint and combined planning for a truly integrated Canada-United States Army-Air Force Command.⁶⁵

During the postwar years, a number of permanent research and training stations were also established in the Arctic regions. The three of note in 1947 were the Joint Canadian-United States Experimental Station at Fort Churchill; the USN Arctic Research Laboratory at Point Barrow, Alaska, which focused on physiological studies;⁶⁶ and the USAF Arctic Polar Survival and Indoctrination School at Nome, Alaska.⁶⁷ The American air base at Fort Churchill had been turned over to the Canadian Army and the RCAF at the end of the war, but with the understanding that it would serve as a joint research and training centre for Arctic warfare techniques. In the summer of 1946, American authorities requested that Canada expand and upgrade the facilities to include housing for an additional 500 American personnel, as well as married quarters, schools, a new water system, and better sanitation. Apprised of Canada's budget limitations, the United States War Department agreed to provide financial assistance to meet the costs. The U.S. Corps of Engineers offered to furnish the construction crew to ensure adequate facilities for its forces. Work began that spring and continued on through the summer. Further expansion resulted in accommodation for 1,300 men and 200 married couples. The Churchill location was preferred over the training centre at Fairbanks, because of the rail link, more severe Arctic climate, shorter distance from the central and eastern United States, and longer daylight hours.⁶⁸

More unique scientific experimentation lay ahead. In 1950, Col. Bernt Balchen was recalled to active service and began training the 10th Air Rescue Squadron to land on the frozen ice pack. The next year, a crew landed on a floe north of Barter Island in the Beaufort Sea and erected a radio station and research lab.⁶⁹ This exercise, in particular, involved touchy questions of Canadian sovereignty and territorial waters.⁷⁰ The USN also began to experiment with oceanography stations on the sea ice, first with Project Ski Jump I in 1951 and then Ski Jump II the following year. Also in 1952, the USAF established a more permanent scientific station on a large ice island, five by nine miles, located a little over a hundred miles south of the North Pole. Known as T-3 or Fletcher's Island, this particular site was occupied on and off over the next seven years and renamed Bravo as part of the research program for the International Geophysical Year in 1957. The overall project was called Ice Skate and also involved another station, Alpha, situated on a two- by two-and-a-half-mile ice floe. In 1959, yet another station was erected on Charlie, which nearly ended in disaster when it suddenly began to break up, necessitating an emergency evacuation of the occupants. At one time, the Air Force had hoped to build large landing fields on these islands, but they were found to be unstable.⁷¹

If the primary purpose of such a formidable military presence was to discourage a would-be aggressor, then the strategy was successful. Some critics,

on the other hand, have argued that it only encouraged greater intrusion by the Soviets for purposes of surveillance. The American defence strategy was an ambitious grand plan for peacetime, exhibiting the same extravagance, determination, and inventiveness that had characterized wartime activities in the Arctic. Similarly, the same obstacles continued to threaten or slow the progress of their defence plans – namely, the Canadian government's insistence that all projects be officially authorized, that Canadian observers be present, that Canadian participation be maximized despite lack of available manpower, that any publicity duly recognize Canadian participation, and that no activity would threaten Canada's sovereign jurisdiction over the Archipelago. The Canadian government was also resistant to the idea of standardization and unified command, which frustrated American plans for integration of a continental military force. Lingering doubts and suspicions of ulterior designs left over from the war years continued to haunt Canadian politicians and diplomats, causing them to be much more reluctant to grant instant approvals or blanket authorizations during the Cold War. Often times the patience of the United States commanders would be sorely tried as they fervently pushed ahead with their plans of Arctic defence. It was not until the Soviets detonated their first atomic test bomb in the summer of 1949 and the outbreak of the Korean War the following June that Ottawa fully accepted the need for such extensive security measures. Even then, it demanded greater active participation with minimal expense.⁷²

In many respects, the 1940s represented a pioneer phase in the military development of the Arctic. In the words of Gen. Curtis LeMay, when summing up the objectives of the USAF, "our frontier now lies across the Arctic wastes of the polar regions."⁷³ This same theme was reiterated directly and indirectly by so many that the message became somewhat commonplace in American rhetoric. Yet one could argue that the physical frontier had not been conquered in the traditional sense of development; rather, technological changes continually presented new challenges which led to new forms of assault. Just as aviation advances made the ambitious Crimson Route obsolete before it was operational, the next decade would produce longer-range bombers and guided missiles requiring even more innovative means of defence. Once again, the military planners would return to their drafting tables to redesign the Arctic for the second half of the twentieth century.

In the summer of 1952, the Lincoln Summer Study Group gave birth to a new phase in the development of the Arctic frontier – Project 572, commonly referred to now as the Distant Early Warning System or DEW Line. Concerned that enemy bombers might steal across the polar skies undetected, scientists developed a sophisticated radar system that was designed to give early warning of

an aerial attack from the north. The cost to the American taxpayer was reported to have been over a billion dollars for the thirty-one radar stations stretching across the Arctic from the Aleutians to the east coast of Greenland. Initially, they were controlled and for the most part manned by U.S. personnel. Two other radar lines served as back-up: the Pinetree Line, extending roughly along the Canadian-United States border, and the Mid-Canada Line, which generally followed the 55th parallel.⁷⁴ Before completion of the DEW Line, the potential of intercontinental ballistic missiles once again spawned new invention. The first fully automated Ballistic Missile Early Warning System (BMEWS) installation would be built at Thule, Greenland, and completed by the summer of 1960. The other two sites, one in Alaska and the other in England's Yorkshire moors, would bypass the old shibboleth of Canadian insistence on quasi-control.⁷⁵

Meanwhile, thwarted in attempts to establish a large American offensive base at either Goose Bay or in the Arctic Archipelago, the eyes of the U.S. military planners turned to Greenland. In April 1951, an agreement was signed between the Danish and American governments that essentially turned over the major responsibility for Greenland's defence to the United States.⁷⁶ By that time, Col. Bernt Balchen, accompanied by army engineers and contractors, was already at Thule to survey what would become the world's largest Arctic air base. The advance party was followed shortly by 120 ships carrying supplies and construction crews. The code name was Operation Blue Jay. In 1951, airlines contracted by the USAF carried 19,000 passengers and additional loads of cargo. Thus began the most inventive and costly Arctic undertaking to date for the United States, yet for almost two years it remained one of the best-kept military secrets. Had they known, it is doubtful that many Canadians would have entertained envy or regrets.

By 1953, a full-fledged American military base emerged at the foot of a glacier in North Star Bay. The community was carefully laid out with gas stations and modern bus service, row upon row of housing for upward of 15,000, and a well-appointed hotel. There was also a fifty-bed hospital, a laundry and dry-cleaning plant; libraries, a bowling alley, chapel, gymnasium, and movie house; a post office, numerous bars, a hobby shop, and bank; grocery, drug, and clothing stores; and even a watch repair shop and an American Express office. To relieve the boredom, there was a radio and television station, and a newspaper, the *Thule Times*. Heat, water, and sewage travelled along encased utilidors to every building. Street signs, traffic lights, and police maintained a semblance of law and order. At one side of the town, large, paved runways led to several oversized hangars. On the other were the ocean piers for ships and submarines. On a hill stood rows of gasoline storage tanks. To avoid the consequences of melting permafrost, most buildings were elevated several feet above ground. A few had

an elaborate cold air ventilation system installed under the floors. Thanks to infinite financial resources, scientific expertise, trained technicians, air and sea transportation, and the cooperation of the Danish government, the ultimate dream of the postwar American military strategists became a reality on the shores of North Star Bay.⁷⁷

Regrettably, this latest plan had not given any thought to the fact that the Arctic wilderness might be the homeland to Inuit families. The consequences became evident in 1953, when the U.S. government annexed the land adjacent to the Thule air base and, with the approval of the Danish government, gave the 116 resident Inuit just four days to move 120 km to the north.⁷⁸ Otherwise, the majority of Greenland's residents tended to ignore their new tenants. Others were able to find employment as unskilled workers on the base.

Yet the most ingenious efforts of the polar scientists lay buried beneath the Greenland ice cap. At well over a hundred kilometres from the air base, Camp Century was built in 1958 and was often described as a giant nuclear bomb shelter, well hidden under the ice from potential enemies. It was designed to house military personnel, planes and weapons, ample food, and essentials, and was powered by a portable atomic generator with enough fuel to provide heat and light for two years. This latest U.S. Army experiment was described by Col. William Carlson:

Camp Century was dug with coal-mining machinery and has sixteen streets, railways, hot and cold running water, flush toilets, dormitories, cafeteria, gymnasium, workshops, a post exchange, a chapel, a hospital and one hundred human inhabitants. Camp Century is free of dust, traffic noises, and changing weather. Building temperatures are set at 60° [F], and the temperature in the streets is kept at 20°. The power source is a portable nuclear reactor, capable of producing 1,500 kilowatts and built at a cost of \$6,300,000.⁷⁹

Unfortunately, the movement of the glacier was greater than anticipated, and after the walls began to collapse, Camp Century was evacuated in 1965, the portable nuclear generator removed, and the facility closed.

Some thirty years later, when I had the opportunity to spend the night at Thule, the air base was still intact, but with noticeable changes. The modern coach buses were fewer in number now that the resident population had dwindled to a little over 1,300, yet other services, while considerably downscaled, remained the same. The BMEWS installations still stood proudly on a hill, now accompanied by a new Air Force Satellite Control facility, reflecting the ever-changing state of technology. Yet large B52 bombers still roared down the runways in the middle of the night, awaking anyone attempting to sleep. Most of the original living quarters, however, lay abandoned in various stages of

disrepair. A little over 200 USAF officers and men resided on the base, accompanied by their wives and children, with Danish civilian workers now reported to be in a slight majority. The base had lost its offensive status when it became a part of the U.S. Strategic Air Defense Command, and in 1983, it was transferred to the new Space Command. Upon questioning the status of Camp Century, a USAF officer indicated it was still buried somewhere under the Greenland glacier but offered no further information other than that it was an ambitious experiment that was no longer useful.⁸⁰ At that time, there was no access to official documents concerning its closure.

When Capt. Elliott Roosevelt surveyed the sites of the first U.S. Arctic weather stations in 1941, neither he nor his father could possibly have foreseen the achievements attained by American scientists and military planners over the next decade. In many respects, it was a science fiction dream of the 1940s turned into a reality of fantastic proportions. In some minds, the greatest success would be the absence of a much-feared nuclear war. For others, the greatest failure would be the lack of any benefit to the indigenous peoples, whose predecessors had inhabited the Arctic long before Europeans learned that the world was round. To future historians, the military installations in the Arctic may become little more than museum pieces, reminiscent of an era of unparalleled achievement in polar science.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the British Admiralty viewed the Arctic as a frontier of exploration. A hundred years later, the American military perceived a frontier of science and technology. What few could articulate in either generation was the inexplicable magnetism that lured the polar adventurers back time and time again to face the endless challenges of the frozen landscape. The majority of Canadians in the mid-twentieth century seemed less imbued with the spirit of high adventure, preferring to look upon their Arctic in terms of nationhood and heritage. As such, American neo-frontiersmen were often viewed as undesirable intruders, raising suspicions, fears, and perhaps even resentment.

For the most part, the tensions arising between Canada and the United States over shared responsibilities in the Arctic were a natural evolution of history and geography. Educated as a historian with years of experience as a diplomat, John Holmes believed that Canadians should always bear in mind that we cut 'manifest destiny' for the United States in half, that we remain a persistent affront to the spirit of 1776, and that the United States owes us nothing. He went on to argue that differences in perspectives are not ideological, as so often claimed, but are really the pragmatic consequences of two very different economic, political, and social situations.⁸¹ From a different perspective in 1989, historian William R. Morrison dismissed any fault on the part of Americans for their assumption that the Canadian Arctic was theirs to exploit, maintaining that most Canadians

had an overly romantic image of their north, a source of symbolic nationalism, and had woefully neglected the territory instead of treating it as an integral part of the nation. The United States, he reminded us, never asserted formal sovereignty over the Arctic; rather, from time to time it has had specific interests there and has done what seemed necessary to further them.⁸² With the end of the Cold War, this view is shared by more and more Canadians.

Political issues aside, there may have been a more powerful influence behind the ingenious U.S. military activities in the Arctic. The unconscious motives in the American psyche – love of adventure and excitement, of meeting challenges and winning, of freedom and independence – all found fulfilment on the Arctic frontier. The romantic symbol of the untamed American West was no longer a reality, whereas the Arctic remained open and accessible, more tangible than a figment of picture books and childhood imagination. When the lure of polar exploration was matched with the frontier spirit of the American mind, it was of little concern that the challenge lay on foreign soil. That would be dealt with if necessary, but for the most part ignored in the enthusiasm of the day. In the mid-twentieth century, the American polar scientists came face to face with the ultimate quest: the opportunity to conquer the last frontier in North America, the legendary Arctic, until it was eventually over-shadowed by the space frontier.

At present, that same fervour seems directed at the war on terrorism, and once again, Canada is drawn ever so tightly into United States' plans for the defence of North America. As was the case with the NORAD agreement in 1958, the origins of Canada's permanent military ties with the United States began with the Joint Defence Agreement of December 1946 that was officially announced the following February. Tensions surrounding defence expectations experienced today – if any – are a product of decisions made by Canadian and American political masters who were determined to protect North America from potential enemy invasion. We should note that so far they have succeeded.

Notes

¹ Bernt Balchen, Corey Ford and Oliver La Farge, *War Below Zero: The Battle for Greenland* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1944), 3.

² *Ibid.*, 14.

³ Alexander Forbes, *Quest for a Northern Air Route* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), 2.

⁴ William S. Carlson, *Lifelines Through the Arctic* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1962), 22-48.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 7-11; Walter Wood, "United States Arctic Exploration through 1939" in *United States Polar Exploration*, ed. Herman R. Friis and Shelby G. Bale Jr.

(Athens, Ohio: University of Ohio Press, 1970), 15-16. Wilkins was Australian born and received a knighthood from England, but eventually became an American citizen.

⁶ Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, Volume 7, *Services Around the World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 313.

⁷ Craven and Cate, *Army Air Forces*, Volume 1, *Plans & Early Operations, January 1939 to August 1942*, 115; Volume 6, *Men and Planes*, Chapter 3, "Air Defense of the United States."

⁸ Peter Neary, *Newfoundland in the North Atlantic World, 1929-1949* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 133-163; Oliver La Farge, *The Eagle in the Egg* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1949), 8-29.

⁹ Craven and Cate, "The AAF Weather Service" in *Army Air Forces*, Volume 7, 311-328; and "Thunder Over the North Atlantic," *Fortune*, 30:5 (November 1944): 156.

¹⁰ Carlson, *Lifelines*, 50-53.

¹¹ J.G. Elbo, "Cryolite and the Mine at Ivigtut, West Greenland," *Polar Record*, 5:35 (1948): 185-188.

¹² P. Burroughs, *The Great Ice Ship Bear: Eighty-nine Years in Polar Seas* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1970).

¹³ Samuel E. Morison, *Battle of the Atlantic, September 1939-May 1943*, Volume 1 of *History of the United States Naval Operations in World War II* (Boston: Atlantic, Little, Brown, 1948), 56-58; and Balchen, Ford and La Farge, *War Below Zero*, 20.

¹⁴ Carlson, *Lifelines*, 54-55; 59-62.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 55-58; Craven and Cate, *Army Air Forces*, Volume 7, 321-322.

¹⁶ Morison, *Battle of the Atlantic*, 62.

¹⁷ Carlson, *Lifelines*, 59-61.

¹⁸ Forbes, *Quest*, Chapter 1 and flyleaf.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 5-8; Carlson, *Lifelines*, 58.

²⁰ Forbes, *Quest*, 9-16.

²¹ Alex Douglas, "The Nazi Weather Station in Labrador," *Canadian Geographic*, 101:6 (December-January 1981-1982): 42.

²² Carlson, *Lifelines*, 61-60; and National Archives, Washington (NA), RG 401, William S. Carlson Papers, photo collection, Series 3 (Bookie - Chimo), Series 8 (Chaplet - Frobisher), and Series 11 (Delight - Padloping).

²³ NA, RG 401-17, Charles J. Hubbard Papers, vol. 5, file 3, "Report on Crystal Force Expedition with preliminary mention of Bluie West 8 and Bluie East 2," included lists of personnel; also Forbes, *Quest*, 18-20; and Carlson, *Lifelines*, 50-63.

²⁴ NA, Charles Hubbard Papers, "Crystal Force Expedition," 2-4.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁶ Canada, Department of External Affairs, *Documents on Canadian External Relations* [hereafter *DCER*] (Ottawa: Supply and Services, 1976), document #292, Moffat to the Acting Secretary of External Affairs, 22 August 1941.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, document #293, Beaudry to Moffat, 22 August 1941.

²⁸ Library and Archives Canada (LAC), RG 36/7, vol. 14, file 28-6, "United States Defence Projects and Installations in Canada," 12 January 1944.

²⁹ NA, Charles Hubbard Papers, vol. 5, file "Report on Crystal Force Expedition." Also Forbes, *Quest*, 17-41.

³⁰ Carlson, *Lifelines*, 62-63; Craven and Cate, *Army Air Forces*, Volume 7, 92-93.

³¹ *DCER*, vol. 9, documents #1025 and #1026.

³² Craven and Cate, *Army Air Forces*, Volume 7, 93.

³³ *DCER*, vol. 9, documents #1025, memo from N. Robertson to the prime minister, and #1026, extracts from the Cabinet War Committee Minutes, both dated 28 May 1942.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, #1029-1032, 12 June through 18 August 1942.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, #950, N. Robertson to the Prime Minister, 22 December 1941; and #951 and 952, memos by Hugh Keenleyside, 27 December 1941 and 14 April 1942.

³⁶ LAC, RG 27 III 65, Escott Reid Papers, vol. 9/10, "Oral History Review with Don Page, 21 July 1977."

³⁷ *DCER*, vol. 9, see documents #1022 through #1072; and NA, RG 59, PJBD Series, vol. 10, correspondence files for 1942 and 1943 contain discussion between John Hickerson of the State Department, also American Secretary of the PJBD, and Maj. Gen. Guy Henry, senior U.S. Army member on the Board representing the Plans Division.

³⁸ Craven and Cate, *Army Air Forces*, Volume 1, 298.

³⁹ NA, State Department Records, RG 59, Microfiche file M1221, R and A 549, "Changing Canadian American Relations," 5 March 1942, Situation Report no. 2 by the Office of Strategic Services for the British Empire Section of the State Department, 1.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, R and A 738a, "Secret Survey of Canada," 2 September 1942, for the Office of Strategic Services of the State Department, 1-2.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁴² NA, State Department Records, RG 59, PJBD Series, vol. 10, "correspondence January - March, 1943," Hickerson to Maj. Gen. Guy Henry, 3 March 1943.

⁴³ LAC, RG 36/7, vol. 14, file 28-6, "United States Defence Projects and Installations in Canada," 12 January 1944.

⁴⁴ Craven and Cate, *Army Air Forces*, Volume 1, 349, 356, and 638.

⁴⁵ Carlson, *Lifelines*, 69-76; Craven and Cate, *Army Air Forces*, Volume 1, 323 and 348.

⁴⁶ NA, RG 59, PJBD Series, vol. 2, file "Goose Bay," La Guardia to Biggar, 16 June 1941.

⁴⁷ Lt. Harry L. Smith, "Flight East," in Balchen, Ford and La Farge, *War Below Zero*, 108; Carlson, *Lifelines*, 64-65. While southern Labrador cannot be considered "Arctic", the role of Goose Bay was critical to the entire operations in the Arctic and North Atlantic. Moreover, the presence of Canadian and British troops, absent elsewhere in the Arctic, likely exacerbated complaints and tensions.

⁴⁸ Forbes, *Quest*, 95; Craven and Cate, *Army Air Forces*, Volume 1, 346.

⁴⁹ Forbes, *Quest*, 43. A native of Brigus, Newfoundland, Bartlett began his Arctic career aboard the 1897-1898 Peary Expedition. He is better known as the captain of the ill-fated *Karluk* on the Canadian Arctic Expedition, 1913-1914, and in command of the 3rd Crocker Land Expedition in 1917.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 51-88; Craven and Cate, *Army Air Forces*, Volume 7, 94.

⁵¹ University of Durham, England, Malcolm MacDonald Papers, 14/4/107-16, "Report on Tour of the American-Built Airfields in the Eastern Arctic," 29 August 1944.

⁵² Arthur Pocock, *Red Flannels and Green Ice* (New York: Random House, 1949), 144-156.

⁵³ Robert A. Bartlett, "Servicing the Arctic Bases," *The National Geographic*, 85:5 (May 1946): 602; Pocock, *Red Flannels*, 114 and 237-238; and Forbes, *Quest*, 115.

⁵⁴ MacDonald Papers, "Report on the American-Built Airfields."

⁵⁵ Nicolas Polunin, *Arctic Unfolding: Experiences and Observations During a Canadian Airborne Expedition in North Ungava, the Northwest Territories, and the Arctic Archipelago* (London: Hutchison, 1949), 70-73.

⁵⁶ MacDonald Papers, "Report on American-Built Airfields."

⁵⁷ NA, RG 401-17, "Report on Crystal Force Expedition," and an added report by E. Goodale, October 1941 - October 1942; also Craven and Cate, *Army Air Forces*, Volume 1, 347; and Carlson, *Lifelines*, 61.

⁵⁸ Pocock, *Red Flannels*, 226-231.

⁵⁹ As late as 1946, Americans based at Crystal I (Chimo) expected that Air Traffic Control would soon turn over the operation to American Overseas Airlines. Polunin, *Arctic Unfolding*, 73.

⁶⁰ United States Senate, *Hearings before a Special Committee Investigating the National Defense Program*, Seventy-eighth Congress, First Session, September 11-December 2, 1943 (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1944).

⁶¹ NA, RG 401-100, Carlson Papers, box 4, Correspondence files. See copies of letters: Wilkins to N. Ogilvie (Canadian Geodetic Survey), n.d.; Wilkins to Stefansson, 15 May 1942; Stefansson to McDiarmid (Canadian Geodetic Survey), 6 October 1942; to Col. Harris of the Air Transport Command, 6 October 1942; also Stefansson to Carlson, 27 July 1943. Stefansson also had close ties with Pan American Airlines before and during the war: see Stefansson to Lt. Col. Robert A. Logan, 15 May 1943.

⁶² Craven and Cate, *Army Air Forces*, Volume 1, 346.

⁶³ Trevor Lloyd, "Aviation in Arctic North America and Greenland," *Polar Record*, 5:35 (December 1948): 163-171.

⁶⁴ Balchen, Ford and La Farge, *War Below Zero*, 20-37.

⁶⁵ Carlson, *Lifelines*, 86-98. The story of the rescue was related by four survivors to Maj. Oliver La Farge, "The Long Wait," in Balchen, Ford and La Farge, *War Below Zero*, 41-104.

⁶⁶ Carlson, *Lifelines*, 82-89, 99-102.

⁶⁷ La Farge, "The Long Wait," 41.

⁶⁸ Balchen, Ford and La Farge, *War Below Zero*, 11.

⁶⁹ Carlson, *Lifelines*, 103-108.

⁷⁰ Craven and Cate, *Army Air Forces*, Volume 7, 99-104.

⁷¹ Balchen, Ford and La Farge, *War Below Zero*, 37.

⁷² Shelagh D. Grant, *Sovereignty or Security: Government Policy in the Canadian North, 1936-1950* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1988), 70-86.

⁷³ Craven and Cate, *Army Air Forces*, Volume 7, 153 and 161.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 330-331; and Craven and Cate, *Army Air Forces*, Volume 6, 618.

⁷⁵ Carlson, *Lifelines*, 78-80.

⁷⁶ Lt. Col. E.M. Galvin, as quoted in Carlson, *Lifelines*, 170-171.

PART 2

¹ Craven and Cate, *Army Air Forces*, Volume 1, 362; Volume 6, 69-70; and Volume 7, 313-358.

² La Farge, *The Eagle in the Egg*, 144.

³ Craven and Cate, *Army Air Forces*, Volume 1, 282-293; Volume 6, 235-236, 645-648; and Volume 7, 313-316.

⁴ NA (Washington), William Carlson Papers, RG 401, vol. 11, file "History of the Arctic, Desert, and Tropic Information Centre," 1-3; vol. 4, "correspondence with Laurence Gould," and "Stefansson Correspondence, 1943." See also Paul H. Nesbitt, "A Brief History of the Arctic, Desert, and Tropic Information Center," in Friis and Bale, eds., *United States Polar Exploration*, 135-145.

⁵ Grant, *Sovereignty or Security*, 127-133; LAC, MG 26 J 4, vol. 350, file 3788, "Exchange of Notes," 23 and 27 June 1944, and 30 March 1946: CC242021 and C241941.

⁶ Personal conversation with former Senator Eugene McCarthy, October 1976.

⁷ "Thunder over the North Atlantic," 153-206.

⁸ NA (Washington), RG 59, PJBD Series, vol. 2, files "Postwar Defense," "Military Cooperation Committee," and "Basic Security Plan"; vol. 10, Correspondence files for 1945 and 1946. See also James Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada: Peacemaking and Deterrence* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 320-336.

⁹ NA (Washington), William Carlson Papers, RG 401, vol. 4, Carlson to Gould, 21 May 1945.

¹⁰ NA, Charles J. Hubbard Papers, box 5, file "Arctops Project." Although there is no date on this copy, the finding aid suggests it might have been as early as 1941.

The map attached indicates a later date, probably 1945, but prior to the end of the war.

¹¹ Ibid., file 8, "Report on Recommended U.S. Weather Bureau Arctic Operations for the Period of April 1946 to July 1, 1947, in compliance with Public Law 296, 79th Congress."

¹² Ibid., "Priorities and Military Cooperation."

¹³ Ibid., note especially "Introduction" and section 4, "Cooperation with Foreign Countries, etc."

¹⁴ Ibid., section 5, "International Agreements."

¹⁵ Grant, *Sovereignty or Security*, 174-178.

¹⁶ National Archives of Canada (NAC), RG 2/18, vol. 74, file D-19-2, "List of Recent U.S. and P.J.B.D. Proposals for Joint Defence Projects and Cooperative Measures"; also *DCER*, vol. 12, documents #917 and #923.

¹⁷ *DCER*, vol. 12, document #912 (report of meeting).

¹⁸ *DCER*, vol. 12, document #908, secret memo from R.M. MacDonnell, Head of Third Political Division of External Affairs to the Legal Division, 6 May 1946. The possibility of undiscovered islands was based on the observation of Sir Hubert Wilkins on a 1937 reconnaissance flight over the region.

¹⁹ Ibid., document #913, "Sovereignty in the Canadian Arctic in Relation to Joint Defence Undertakings," sections 19 and 27.

²⁰ Ibid., document #921, Wrong to Heeney, 24 June 1946.

²¹ J.W. Pickersgill and D.F. Forster, *The Mackenzie King Record*, Volume 3, 1945-1946 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 265-267.

²² *DCER*, vol. 12, document #924.

²³ LAC, RG 2/18, vol. 74, file D-19-2, "Joint Defence Projects and Cooperative Measures," 30 June 1946; summary of the agreements appear in vol. 57, file A-25-5 and vol. 74, D-19-2, memo 1 December 1947.

²⁴ NA, Charles Hubbard Papers, vol. 5, file 7, "1946 Report."

²⁵ J. Tuzo Wilson, "Exercise Musk-Ox," *Polar Record*, 5 (1947): 14-25; also correspondence, 10 June 1948, J. Tuzo Wilson to author.

²⁶ David Judd, "Canada's Northern Policy," *Polar Record*, 14 (May 1969): 595. A previous reconnaissance by the Royal Air Force (RAF), the *Aries* flights, had been carried out over the Canadian Arctic the previous summer, but their purpose was primarily to test the feasibility of transpolar air routes. Wing Commander R.H. Winfield, "The Royal Air Force North Polar Research Flights, 1945," *Polar Record*, 5:33 (December 1947): 6-13.

²⁷ John W. Holmes, "Crisis in Canadian American Relations: A Canadian Perspective" in *Friends So Different: Essays on Canada and the United States in the 1980s*, ed. Lansing Lamont and J. Duncan Edmonds (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1989), 21.

²⁸ This view is supported by William R. Morrison, "Eagle Over the Arctic" in *Interpreting Canada's North: Selected Readings*, ed. Kenneth S. Coates and William R. Morrison (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1989), 180.

²⁹ NA, RG 59, vol. 10, file "Correspondence – 1946," "Problems of Canadian-United States Cooperation in the Arctic," office of the AC/S Intelligence, USAAF, 29 October 1946. This document appears in its entirety in S. Grant, *Sovereignty or Security*, 302-311.

³⁰ NA, RG 59, PJBD Series, vol. 10, file "Correspondence – 1946," American section of the PJBD memo on the subject of United States-Canadian Relations, 28 August 1946, and related correspondence.

³¹ LAC, RG 2/18, vol. 74, file D-19-2, memo to the PJBD from Maj. Gen. Guy Henry, Senior Army Member, 9 September 1946, item #6.

³² NA, RG 59, PJBD Series, vol. 2, file "Basic Papers," memorandum on "Joint Defense Discussions," 21 November 1946. See reference on page 4 to agreement "that the proposed meetings were not the proper place to discuss the possible claims of other countries to territories in the Canadian Arctic," and Lester Pearson's admission "that placing the item on the agenda might have represented an effort by Canada to obtain acceptance of the 'Sector Principle.'"

³³ LAC, RG 2/18, vol. 46, file A-25, F.T. Davies, "The Sector Principle in Polar Claims," 11 February 1947.

³⁴ Pickersgill and Forster, eds., *The Mackenzie King Record*, Volume 3, 362-363.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 394.

³⁶ For more complete details of the negotiations and debate, see Grant, *Sovereignty or Security*, 178-187. Reference to discussion and agreement on "civilian cover" is found in NA, RG 59, PJBD Series, vol. 2, file "Basic Papers," Minutes (US) of joint meetings held on 21 November and 16-17 December 1946, with detailed rationale of the Canadian position discussed in a copy on file of "Working Papers for Use in Discussions with the United States," 6 December 1946, section 3:1-3.

³⁷ Joseph Jockel, "The United States and Canadian Efforts at Continental Air Defense" (Ph.D. diss. John Hopkins University, 1978), 46.

³⁸ LAC, RG 2/18, vol. 57, file A-25-5, memo "Northern and Arctic Projects," 28 January 1948; and John C. Reed, "United States Arctic Exploration since 1939" in Friis and Bale, eds., *United States Polar Exploration*, 23-24.

³⁹ NA, RG 59, PJBD Series, vol. 5, file "Correspondence -- 1954," notes on Canadian agreements and undertakings, dated 15 October 1954.

⁴⁰ See personnel lists and the operating schedules in the reports dating from 1947 through 1950: NA, Charles Hubbard Papers, vol. 5.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, file 8, "Analysis of Possible Arctic Operations May 1946 to July 1, 1947" and file 9, "Arctic Activities -- Summer 1947."

⁴² *Ibid.*, "Arctic Activities -- Summer 1947."

⁴³ LAC, RG 2/18, vol. 57, file A-25-5, and vol. 74, file D-19-2, reports dated 1 December 1947, 28 January, 23 April, and 10 July 1948 (including map); and NA, RG 59, PJBD Series, vol. 10, "Weather Stations."

⁴⁴ "Establishment of Joint Canadian-United States Meteorological Stations in the Canadian Arctic, 1947-49," *Polar Record*, 5:40 (July 1950): 602-605.

⁴⁵ NA, RG 59, PJBD Series, vol. 7, file "Weather Stations," memo by Gen. Guy Henry to the PJBD, 14 February 1947.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, correspondence PJBD to Henry, 6 May 1947; and Henry to S.F. Rae, 19 May 1947.

⁴⁷ LAC, RG 2/18, vol. 57, file A-25-5, memo "Northern and Arctic Projects," 28 January 1948.

⁴⁸ Grant, *Sovereignty or Security*, Chapters 7 and 9.

⁴⁹ "Establishment of Joint Canadian-United States Meteorological Stations in the Canadian Arctic, 1947-49," 602-605; also NA, Charles Hubbard Papers, vol. 5, file 11, "Report on Airlift Operations Spring 1950," 35.

⁵⁰ NA, Charles Hubbard Papers, vol. 4, file 5, "Rough Diary 1948 Summer," and vol. 5, file 9, "Arctic Activities -- Summer 1947." Note personnel lists.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 10 and 11, files "1950 Plans for Resupply of Joint United States-Canadian Weather Stations" and "Report on Airlift Operations Spring 1950 to Joint Canadian United States Weather Stations."

⁵² *Ibid.*, vol. 11, "Report on Airlift Operations Spring 1950," 35-47.

⁵³ "Aircraft Accident at Alert," *Arctic Circular*, 3:4 (October 1950): 47-48.

⁵⁴ NA, RG 59, PJBD Series, vol. 2, file "Fort Churchill - 2," memos regarding Operation Beetle dated 9 April 1947 and 2 September 1947.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, file "1949 Correspondence," report 23 June 1950; and "Ottawa Report," *Montreal Standard*, 24 June 1950.

⁵⁶ Nesbitt, "A Brief History," 140-145.

⁵⁷ NA, RG 59, PJBD Series, vol. 11, file "July-December 1948 Correspondence," memo from Magann to Snow, 29 November 1948.

⁵⁸ Carlson, *Lifelines*, 192-253.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 216-224.

⁶⁰ Canada, Department of Mines and Resources, "Factual Record Supporting Canadian Sovereignty in the Arctic," 28 June 1949: 203-207 (leather bound mimeograph copy).

⁶¹ Maj. J.M. Berry, "Royal Canadian Army Service Corps in Northern Trials and Operations," *Arctic Circular*, 4:1 (January 1951): 3-10.

⁶² "United States Task Force "Frigid" 1947," *Polar Record*, 5:34 (December 1947): 78.

⁶³ "United States Navy Experimental Training Cruise in Alaskan Waters," *Polar Record*, 5:40 (July 1950): 619-620.

⁶⁴ "Exercise Firestep," *Arctic Circular*, 4:4 (April/May 1951): 63.

⁶⁵ "Exercise Sweetbriar and Exercise Sun Dog I," *Arctic Circular*, 3:3 (September 1950): 32-33.

⁶⁶ Reed, "Arctic Exploration," 22-23; and "The Arctic Research Laboratory at Point Barrow, Alaska," *Polar Record*, 5:36 (December 1948): 211-212.

⁶⁷ "United States Air Force Rescue Activities in Alaska," *Polar Record*, 6:41 (January 1951): 115-116.

⁶⁸ NA, RG 59, PJBD Series, vol. 2, file "Fort Churchill – 2," memos regarding expansion, from 22 August 1946 through to 16 February 1952. Note memos dated 3 February, 14 May, and 2 September 1947.

⁶⁹ Carlson, *Lifelines*, 237.

⁷⁰ NA, RG 59, PJBD Series, vol. 5, file "Correspondence -- 54," see note #5 regarding "Beaufort Sea Expedition."

⁷¹ Carlson, *Lifelines*, 225-267; Reed, "Arctic Exploration," 26-28.

⁷² Grant, *Sovereignty or Security*, 223-230.

⁷³ As quoted in Carlson, *Lifelines*, 191 (n.d.).

⁷⁴ Currently, this system is in the process of replacement by yet another technical advance – the North Warning System – involving only thirteen manned radar installations.

⁷⁵ Carlson, *Lifelines*, 192-195; for updated version relating the DEW Line and its modernization with the BMEWS and new defence technology, see John Honderich, *Arctic Imperative: Is Canada Losing the North?* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 102-115.

⁷⁶ H.C. Bach and Jorgen Taagholt, *Greenland and the Arctic Region -- Resources and Security Policy* (Copenhagen: Danish Defence, 1982), 67.

⁷⁷ Carlson, *Lifelines*, 196-203; "United States Air Force Fact Sheet," 1012th Air Base Group, Thule Air Base, Greenland, and personal observation during a visit to the base with Canadian Institute of International Affairs (CIIA) study group tour in June 1984.

⁷⁸ Jens Brosted and Mads Faegteborg, "Civil Aspects of Military Installations in Greenland," *Information North*, publication of the Arctic Institute of North America (Winter 1986): 14-15. The official announcement claimed that the Inuit had wanted to move because the noise had caused the game animals to disappear. Recent Danish studies have shown that they had been exceedingly reluctant to move.

⁷⁹ Carlson, *Lifelines*, 202.

⁸⁰ Personal visit by the author in 1984.

⁸¹ Holmes, "Crisis in Canadian American Relations," 18-21.

⁸² Morrison, "Eagle Over the Arctic," 180.

11

Why the *St. Roch*? Why the Northwest Passage? Why 1940? New Answers to Old Questions

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For almost half a century, the reasons behind orders sending the RCMP schooner *St. Roch* through the Northwest Passage during the Second World War have puzzled historians and other scholars. True, there were rumours of a defence-related mission, but there was no hard evidence, no tangible proof. Nor did the captain, Sgt. Henry Larsen, provide many clues other than “Canada was at war and the government had realized the need to demonstrate the country’s sovereignty over the Arctic islands,”¹ a statement not verified in official documents. Then, unexpectedly, last year, during research on Canadian wartime relations with Greenland, two memos were found in RCMP archival files that directly linked the voyage of the *St. Roch* to a government plan to defend and occupy the island in the spring of 1940.² Subsequent evidence from Larsen’s personal papers confirms that the captain was fully aware of the original purpose of his mission.³

Although these memos might appear to contradict Larsen’s own explanation, careful study of the documents and related circumstances suggests that the reference to sovereignty in the autobiography published posthumously could also be defined in very broad terms to include security considerations. Omission of any reference to the initial motive behind the orders was entirely in keeping with his responsibility as a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to maintain a confidence in the national interest. Today, the rationale for that secrecy is no longer valid, and the once-secret documents explaining the circumstances and events are now accessible to the public. Perhaps it was a stroke of fate that this information should come to light during the 50th-anniversary celebrations of the venerable ship’s historic voyage through the Northwest Passage. Along with pride of achievement is now added new pride of a greater purpose.

What was the crisis that triggered Canadian plans to occupy Greenland, and what possible role was the RCMP expected to play? These questions involve a much longer narrative, already related by James Eayrs and C.P. Stacey, whose accounts were based primarily on files originating from External Affairs and National Defence respectively.⁴ The RCMP commissioner's files do not contradict these narratives, but they do add further details of police involvement. A synopsis of events provides background to the involvement of the *St. Roch* and explanation of the secrecy surrounding her mission.

In the winter and early spring of 1940, public attention was focused on events abroad as Germany advanced across Europe. When Denmark fell on 9 April 1940, British and Canadian military strategists were understandably concerned about the future of the Danish colony of Greenland. In light of the increasing German U-boat activity in the North Atlantic, defence of the large ice-covered island was considered a matter of high priority, partially because of its location on the periphery of North America and its excellent harbours for submarine bases, but also because of the cryolite mine situated on the shores of an isolated 12-mile fiord in southwest Greenland.

Cryolite was crucial in the production of aluminum, and this one mine represented the only natural source available to the Allied war industries. Although a synthetic substitute had recently come on the market, the Greenland mine was the only known source of the raw mineral, with the only refineries being in Denmark, the Penn Salt Company in the United States, and the Aluminum Company of Canada, located at Arvida, Quebec. Previously, Britain relied on production from Danish smelters, and to a lesser extent upon Norwegian refineries that used the synthetic alternative. With both countries now in German hands, the Allies were dependent on United States and Canadian production. As long as the United States remained neutral and was utilizing vast quantities of aluminum for its own war industry, it was considered urgent that the Aluminum Company of Canada gain assured access to the Greenland cryolite. Should Germany have decided to take over or merely sabotage the mine, the effect would have crippled the British and Canadian war efforts.⁵

Adding to the urgency were "reports of enemy ships heading in the direction of Iceland and Southern Greenland"⁶ and requests from the United Kingdom "of utmost importance to obtain maximum possible tonnage of aluminum from Canada."⁷ Encouraged to take action by officials of the U.K. government⁸ and the Aluminum Company of Canada,⁹ it is not surprising that Canada would seriously consider all means to protect Allied interests. At first hesitant to commit forces and concerned about the "danger of disturbing American opinion," Mackenzie King finally agreed, with the proviso that Canada was merely looking

into the defence of Greenland in cooperation with British forces, otherwise Canada would be “blamed for taking over.”¹⁰

High-level discussion followed based on reports prepared by External Affairs.¹¹ Initially, the objective was clearly precautionary: “to prevent enemy nationals gaining a foothold there and giving them an opportunity to sabotage the cryolite mines.” In the Royal Canadian Navy’s (RCN) estimation, only a small force would be required to occupy the island, “and a small police detail at the two or three more important centres is all that will be necessary to maintain.” Whether this was a realistic assessment or not, the navy did not have frigates or destroyers available for the mission, nor would “any of these ships be risked in the ice conditions prevalent in the Davis Strait.” Instead, it was suggested that the CGS *N.B. McLean* could “easily be armed with 4 in. guns.”¹²

On 14 April, a sub-committee meeting chaired by the director of Military Operations and Intelligence supported plans for defence of the mine and occupation of the former Danish colony, with the recommendation that an advance party of 100 – including 12 RCMP officers and constables – proceed to Greenland in early May aboard the icebreaker CGS *N.B. McLean*. The expedition was given the illustrious name of “Force X,” and all supplies and participants were to be mobilized and ready for departure within two weeks. Their task was to select gun sites and lay out a military camp in preparation for the arrival of the main contingent. Clearly, though, RCMP detachments were considered critical to the success of the mission.¹³

The Chiefs of Staff Committee subsequently issued a formal document that expanded on the details to include specific lists of participants and necessary equipment. The main body of the occupation force would constitute an army unit of approximately 250 to arrive in early June. In addition to the mine location, small occupation forces would be posted to the two Danish administrative centres, Godhavn and Godthaab, on the west coast of Greenland. The cost of establishing and maintaining the occupation forces for one year was estimated at \$585 000, excluding purchase of armaments and RCMP expenses.¹⁴

After the 14 April meeting, Insp. T.B. Caulkin, [Acting Assistant Commissioner] “G” Division, sent a memo to the commissioner suggesting the names of four officers for Greenland duty. He also raised the question of employing the *St. Roch*:

It is considered that the R.C.M.P. schooner *St. Roch* would be of inestimable value to our Personnel stationed at Godhavn and Godthaab and would be in communication with the Force Headquarters by wireless.

If approval is given to have the *St. Roch* proceed from the Pacific to the Eastern theatre, I feel confident that Sergt. [sic] Larsen would prove a valuable man in that area in several different ways.

If the *St. Roch* should go, consideration might be given to increasing the personnel on the boat, also whether she should be armed with at least a machine gun.

Further, arrangements would have to be made for some fuel to be sent in for her, such as diesel oil, etc., this could be despatched from Montreal later.¹⁵

Considering that in 1940 Canada had no arctic airstrips and no RCN vessels available for polar navigation, the RCMP schooner was a logical support ship and patrol vessel.

After the retirement of the CGS *Beothic* in 1932, the Canadian government had rented space on the Hudson's Bay Company ship the *Nascopie* for the Eastern Arctic Patrol, which supplied the RCMP posts and provided medical aid to the isolated communities. While the *Nascopie* was also participating in the war effort, it was still needed to supply the company's fur trading posts. Thus, it was logical that the RCMP should have its own means of supply and transportation in the Eastern Arctic quite apart from other duties it might fulfil as part of security measures. The *St. Roch* was the only ice-capable police vessel of any appreciable size available for arctic patrols and, if necessary, to serve as a communications and supply link with the proposed Canadian occupation forces in Greenland and the newly established consulate. The ship's home port was Vancouver, as its primary function since 1930 had been to supply and patrol the Western Arctic. The plan to bring the ship to the Eastern Arctic through the Northwest Passage seemed a logical solution, since a southern route through the Panama Canal would have destroyed any attempt at keeping the mission secret.

As a consequence, on 16 April, Commissioner Wood wrote to Insp. James Fripps of the west coast "E" Division with explicit instructions to contact Sgt. Larsen and discuss the matter. Fripps's reply was:

Strictly Confidential

Vancouver, B.C. 22. April. 1940.

Re: Schooner "St. Roch" – R.C.M. Police,

1. This will acknowledge receipt of your letter dated the 16th inst., on the 19th. inst. I proceeded to Victoria and on the 20th inst. I discussed the matter with Sgt. Larsen that it was your intention if possible to have the schooner "St. Roch" proceed through the North-West Passage to Greenland after she had discharged the supplies for Coppermine and Cambridge Bay Detachments. Sgt. Larsen stated he would be pleased to make this proposed patrol as he always had a desire to travel through the North-West Passage. He recommended that the

St. Roch should pass through the North-West Passage during the month of August, not later, and to do this it was absolutely essential that the “St. Roch” depart from Vancouver not later than the 20th of June next.

2. Further he recommended that no extra duties should be given to the “St. Roch” other than delivering supplies to the Detachments. Sgt. Larsen will require an Admiralty Chart of Greenland and the North-West Passage. This would include Baffin Island.

Fripps concludes the memo with “I impressed upon Sgt. Larsen that this matter was to be treated strictly confidential and not to be discussed with any other member of the Force.” He also refers to a previous request for a “sea skiff” and outboard motor made by Larsen to Insp. Caulkin while in Ottawa.¹⁶

Together, these two memos testify that approval for the *St. Roch*’s voyage was not confirmed until mid-April, that approval was related directly to the proposed occupation of Greenland, and that besides Larsen and Commissioner Wood, both Insp. Fripps and Insp. Caulkin were fully informed of the plans. The second memo also confirms, however, that Larsen was indeed in Ottawa in early spring and, as suggested in his autobiography, may well have discussed the feasibility of taking the ship to the Eastern Arctic with his commanding officer and perhaps informally with the commissioner. Formal approval came later.

Additional evidence supports the contention that Larsen was fully aware of the primary purpose of the voyage. In correspondence with the current RCMP commissioner in 1957, Larsen defended himself against implied criticism by the captain of the *Nascopie* and explained the circumstances leading to the *St. Roch*’s voyage through the Passage in 1940-42:

The reason for this I believe, was that prior to the “St. Roch” leaving Vancouver on its eastward journey through the Arctic, Denmark had been invaded and Greenland was more or less left on its own. Had the “St. Roch” managed to navigate the Northwest Passage that year it is my understanding that our Government was planning to send her to Greenland. I believe also that a Canadian Consulate was established in Greenland about that time, and I understand this was one of the reasons why the “St. Roch” was instructed to proceed eastward in 1940.¹⁷

The last statement is particularly important, since discussion of a Canadian Consulate in Greenland did not arise until April 1940 and was not approved until mid-May. This reference to the consulate partly explains the continuation of the voyage after the “occupation” plans were cancelled: Larsen also claimed that the fuel left at Pond Inlet by the *Nascopie* in 1940 was for use by the RCMP ship that was expected to winter in Greenland¹⁸ or “some designated spot in the

Eastern Arctic.”¹⁹ The question of who would protect or defend Greenland was not officially decided until the following year. In the same letter, Larsen also alludes to sovereignty reasons and “being utilized to advantage in the Eastern Arctic,” with specific reference to the closure of the police posts at Dundas Harbour, Craig Harbour and Bache Peninsula.²⁰ This rationale was likely part of earlier informal discussions, since sovereignty concerns *per se* do not appear in the memos confirming approval and instructions in mid-April, unless defined to include national security and defence. When considering the 1940 police memos together with Larsen’s later explanations, it appears there may have been multiple reasons for the voyage, perhaps shifting in priority relative to changing circumstances in 1940.

In wartime especially, events rarely happen as planned, and the Canadian strategy to occupy Greenland was no exception. The initial rationale for “Force X” was the mistaken belief that a small Canadian occupation force would be more acceptable to the neutral United States than British intervention, which would have clearly violated the principles of the Monroe Doctrine.²¹ This opinion could not have been further from the truth.

At a meeting between Prime Minister King and President Roosevelt on 2 May 1940, Roosevelt made it clear that the United States wished no occupying force on Greenland, but admitted that if there were a German attack, then “it would be necessary for Allied Naval Forces to take action.” Secretary of State Hull seemed to be of a different mind, referring to considerations of the Monroe Doctrine.²² That same day, the acting minister of National Defence abruptly ordered the demobilization of “Force X” and “all action in connection with it suspended.”²³ Supplies already in storage were dispersed and mobilization orders cancelled.

As explained in confidential memos and minutes, the U.S. Secretary of State was “insistently anxious” that any plans to occupy Greenland be dropped.²⁴ The ensuing discussions and debates clarified the State Department’s contention that the current interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine rejected the right of *any* third party to interfere in the political or military affairs of Greenland. As an alternative, the State Department believed the mine could be defended by local residents with armaments supplied by the United States. Pressured by British officials to take action yet unwilling to oppose the firm wishes of the United States, Canadian officials were caught in a dilemma.²⁵

One might well ask why, if “Force X” was cancelled, was the *St. Roch* still proceeding to Greenland? When viewed in retrospect, the emotions and fears attached to Germany’s march across Europe may seem unwarranted, but in the summer of 1940, the security of Greenland and the Eastern Arctic was considered critical to prevent the spread of hostilities to North America. And as Canadian

fears mounted, a number of defensive contingency plans were hastily set in motion in an effort to stem the advance of the aggressors. With increasing enemy activity in the North Atlantic and without a firm commitment by the United States to defend Greenland, the decision to have the *St. Roch* on standby in the Eastern Arctic seems logical. Whether it was feasible depended on the ability of the captain and the *St. Roch* to navigate the Northwest Passage.

As events unfolded, the governors of North and South Greenland claimed constitutional powers to take absolute control in the event of an emergency yet were without military capabilities to defend against an enemy attack. The Danish minister in Washington, meanwhile, claimed that he in turn represented the two governors and established the American-Danish Greenland Commission to act as an advisory body.²⁶ In 1940, neither the United Kingdom nor Canada was prepared to challenge the legitimacy of these actions. Still at issue was the status of existing contracts for the cryolite production.

Prior to the fall of Denmark, the Penn Salt Company of Philadelphia had retained a monopoly over the North American market, which involved one-third of the mine's exports. The Aluminum Company of Canada, however, had hoped to acquire the European contracts with the Danish refineries, assuring Allied control of all exports not under contract to Penn Salt. In addition, this would strengthen the wartime economy by adding revenue to the Canadian treasury. The proposal was presented at a meeting attended by representatives of the Canadian and U.S. governments, the chairman of the American-Danish Greenland Commission, and the presidents of Penn Salt and the Aluminum Company of Canada. As expected, the American representatives refused to entertain any proposal that did not give the United States company clear access to the mine's postwar production.²⁷

While negotiations continued in an attempt to resolve the impasse, the *Nascopie* had departed from Halifax without fanfare and was heading northward to Greenland, ostensibly "to deliver staple supplies" as a relief measure, but with the expressed hope that "arrangements could be made also for return cargo of about two thousand tons" of cryolite. On board was the Canadian vice-consul to Greenland, A.E. Porsild.²⁸ Others included Canadian artillery officers, mining engineers, and RCMP officers. At the same time, another vessel, the *Julius Thomsen*, was en route to Greenland from England, carrying the new Canadian consul and senior diplomat, K.P. Kirkwood, along with several British naval officers.²⁹

Also heading for Greenland and several days in the lead was the United States Coast Guard cutter the *Comanche*, carrying armaments and the newly appointed U.S. consul. First on his agenda was a tour of the cryolite mine, which would also allow the American ship to guard the fiord against any uninvited "visitors"

who might wish to assume control of the mine.³⁰ In Vancouver, meanwhile, the *St. Roch* continued preparations for its voyage through the Northwest Passage.

The arrival of the *Nascopie* and the *Julius Thomsen* in Greenland did not escape the attention of the outspoken Assistant U.S. Secretary of State, Adolf Berle, who called two emergency meetings on 3 June – first with British diplomats, then with the Canadians. In his view, the presence of Canadian and British military officers aboard the two ships represented a blatant attempt by the Aluminum Company of Canada to secure possession of the cryolite mine. Admitting he was dispensing with diplomatic niceties, Berle declared that the president had been notified of Canada's actions and had stated he would be "very angry" if Canada attempted to occupy Greenland. The assistant secretary went on to say that "this was not the time for this type of 1890 imperialism and that the days of Cecil Rhodes had passed." In his opinion, this incident only confirmed his belief that "the Aluminum Company of Canada was trying to take advantage of the present situation in order to get control of the cryolite mine." Canadian officials were given a clear warning that defence of the mine was not their responsibility and that access to the cryolite was dependent upon cooperation with the United States.³¹

Three days later, the question of Greenland's and Iceland's futures evoked a long and heated debate in the United States Senate. Citing the Monroe Doctrine as the basis for the U.S. right to intervene, the Senate was also told of Greenland's economic importance, not just because of the cryolite but for its potential resources of mica, graphite, gold and hydro-electric power. Also discussed was the possibility of negotiating a purchase or takeover of the island.³² Yet regardless of the urgency expressed in the debate, it was almost a year before the United States would formally and unilaterally assume full responsibility for the defence of Iceland and Greenland. At that time, the United States again firmly rejected Canada's offer of assistance, stating that its participation was "not required."³³

Although ice-bound in the Western Arctic the first winter, the *St. Roch* continued to plough eastward on its voyage through the Northwest Passage, apparently still under secret orders and with extra supplies for the next year picked up at Tuktoyaktuk. When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, the schooner was again stuck fast in the ice, this time just south of Boothia Peninsula. Now well past the halfway mark, there was no recourse but to continue. According to Larsen, by the time they had reached Pond Inlet, the Americans had "pretty well taken over in Greenland."³⁴ As the fortunes of war continued to favour the Allies in the North Atlantic, the *St. Roch* was ordered to return west in 1944, this time via Lancaster Sound.

Given that the 1940 voyage of the *St. Roch* was approved initially because of Canadian plans to occupy Greenland and continued for a number of wartime-

related considerations, there are still a number of questions outstanding. Why, when acknowledging the fact to his commanding officer in 1957, would Larsen fail to mention the defence of Greenland in his autobiography? Why mention an earlier discussion with the commissioner in Ottawa, if the orders were not finalized and approved until mid-April? Why was the manuscript of the autobiography not published during his lifetime? Are there logical reasons to explain these actions by a man known for his honesty, integrity and loyalty to the traditions of the Force? There are reasons – some more obvious than others.

In the first instance, the proposed Canadian occupation of Greenland was “top secret,” and Larsen was specifically warned that “the matter was strictly confidential and not to be discussed with any member of the Force.”³⁵ Indeed, one account alleged that even his wife did not know of the ship’s destination.³⁶ Initially a military secret, diplomatic concerns compounded the potential sensitivities that might result from inopportune disclosure of the Canadian plans. Thus, it was expected that Larsen and his superiors would be bound by their strict code of ethics to maintain that confidence.

But why was it important to maintain the secrecy about “Force X” over 20 years after the fact? As noted above, both James Eayrs in 1965 and C.P. Stacey in 1970 freely discussed the plans to occupy Greenland in their respective publications covering the events of World War II. Here, too, there is a logical explanation, particularly obvious to an historian, concerning the 25-year rule restricting the public disclosure of confidential government documents relating to Canadian-American relations. The fact that Larsen did not submit his manuscript for publication during his lifetime may suggest he had valid reasons. Henry Larsen died in September 1964 – one year short of being released from the limitation of the 25-year rule. Would the manuscript have been changed otherwise? Only Larsen could have answered that question.

Was Larsen less than truthful in his autobiography? Hardly. In the first place, if there were omissions or “poetic licence,” it was only in an unpublished manuscript that continued to “maintain the confidence,” as instructed in April 1940. Likely Larsen and the commissioner did discuss sovereignty concerns and possible plans for the *St. Roch* in the Eastern Arctic as suggested, but apparently without final approval until the Greenland situation became critically unstable. In an earlier report, Larsen did state that it was “the spring of 1940” when they received their assignment from Commissioner Wood.³⁷ If there were discrepancies, they were rooted in the code of ethics governing RCMP actions in “national interests” – and a tribute to an officer of the highest integrity.

The *St. Roch*’s two voyages through the Northwest Passage were just cause for celebration in a war-weary Canada – a truly notable achievement by a Canadian ship in her own arctic waters. This venture was not “something of a stunt or a

trip to compete with the *Nascopie*,”³⁸ as implied by the Hudson’s Bay Company captain, but a fitting tribute to the prowess of the hardy *St. Roch* and the able men who sailed her into the annals of history half a century ago. As for Henry Asbjorn Larsen? In his words, “had it not been for the war, we would never have had the occasion or opportunity to make this passage.”³⁹ Yet those who knew him also knew he was “delighted to have the opportunity. . . . A correct and careful police officer, he was an adventurer at heart.”⁴⁰

Notes

¹ Henry A. Larsen, in cooperation with Frank R. Sheer and Edvard Omholt-Jensen, *The Big Ship: An Autobiography by Henry A. Larsen* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967), 141.

² T.B. Caulkin, Memo undated but refers to military communiques of 13-15 April 1940. Library and Archives Canada (LAC), RCMP Records, RG 18 (acc. 85-86/048)134/ G-809-8-1941; J. Fripps, Memo from Commanding Officer of “E” Division to the RCMP Commissioner, 22 April 1940, LAC, RCMP Records, RG 18 (acc. 85-86/048) 34/G-809-8-1941.

³ Henry A. Larsen, Memo to the RCMP Commissioner, 13 November 1957, LAC, RG 18, acc. 85-86/048 14/G-577-14/supp “G”. Copies of letters from Larsen to the RCMP commissioner were discovered among Larsen’s personal papers by his daughter and subsequently copied and forwarded to the author by Christopher Rowley and Jane Armstrong of CineNova Productions, a firm currently producing a documentary film on the *St. Roch*’s 1940-42 voyage through the Northwest Passage; Henry A. Larsen, Memo to the RCMP commissioner, 15 November 1957, LAC, RG 18, acc. 85-86/048 14/G-577-14/supp “G”.

⁴ James Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada: Appeasement and Rearmament* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), 169-171; C.P. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments: The War Policies of Canada, 1939-1945* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 1970), 367-370.

⁵ Department of External Affairs, Memorandum, initialled NAR, with reference to telegram from United Kingdom Aluminum Controller, 11 April 1940, LAC, RG 251273112671-40/1; “Proposals for a Canadian Policy Relating to Greenland,” 6 May 1940, LAC, Department of External Affairs, RG 25/273112671-40/1.

⁶ Telegram to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, London, 9 April [year], LAC, Secretary of State for External Affairs, RG 25/27311 267 1-40/1.

⁷ Memorandum, initialled NAR, with reference to telegram from United Kingdom Aluminum Controller, 11 April 1940, LAC, Department of External Affairs, RG 251273112671-40/1.

⁸ Vincent Massey, Telegram Cypher No. 527, the Canadian High Commissioner in London to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, 2 May 1940, LAC, RG 25/27311267J-40/1.

⁹ F.W. Bruce, Letter to Norman Robertson, External Affairs, 9 April 1940, LAC, Department of External Affairs Records, RG 25/2731/267 J-40/1; Bruce, Letter to Norman Robertson, 11 April 1940, LAC, RG 25/27311267 J-40/1; and Bruce, Letter to H.L. Keenleyside, External Affairs, 27 April 1940, LAC, RG 25/27311267 J-40/1.

¹⁰ O.D. Skelton, note to file on discussion with the Prime Minister with handwritten notes taken at the meeting, 12 April 1940, LAC, RG 25/2731/2671-40/1.

¹¹ O.D. Skelton, "Secret" letter, 12 April 1940, from the Under-Secretary to the Acting Deputy Minister of National Defence (Naval and Air), J.L. Ralston, with enclosures of two reports dated 10 and 11 April 1940, "The Position of Greenland," and "Canada, Greenland, and the Monroe Doctrine," LAC, Records of the Department of National Defence, RG 24/3919/1037-6-111.

¹² Memorandum to Chief of Naval Staff from Commander, D.O.D., 13 April 1940, "Occupation and Defence of Greenland," LAC, Department of National Defence, RG 18 (acc. 85-86/048) 34/G-809-8-1941.

¹³ Report of the Joint Sub-Committee of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, "Defence of Ivigtut, Greenland," 13 April 1940, LAC, RG 18 (acc. 85-85/048) 34/G-809-8-1941; Department of National Defence, General Staff Instruction No. 1, Copy #10 to RCMP Commissioner. Issued in confirmation of decisions made at a meeting held under the Chairmanship of the Director of Military Operations and Intelligence, 14 April 1940, LAC, RG 18 (acc. 85-85/048) 34/G-809-8-1941 (copies also in RG 24/3919/1037-6-111).

¹⁴ Preliminary report and confirmation of decisions made at 14 April meeting on "Occupation and Defence of Ivigtut, Greenland," by the Joint Planning Sub-Committee of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, 15 April 1940, LAC, Department of National Defence, RG 18, acc. 85-86/048, 34/G-809-8-1941; Department of National Defence, Chiefs of Staff Committee, "Defence of Ivigtut, Greenland," signed by Maj. Gen. T.V. Anderson (COS), Rear Admiral Percy W. Nelles (CNS) and Air-Commodore L.S. Breadner (Acting CAS), 15 April 1940, LAC, RCMP commissioner's copy found in RG 18 (85-86/048) 34/G-809-8-1941 while other copies and related documents were found in RG 24/3919/1037-6-111 and in RG 25/27311267 1-40/1.

¹⁵ Caulkin, memo undated, but refers to military communiques of 13-15 April 1940, National Archives of Canada (NAC), RCMP Records, RG 18 (acc. 85-86/048) 134/ G-809-8-1941.

¹⁶ Fripps, Memo from Commanding Officer of "E" Division to the RCMP Commissioner, 22 April 1940, LAC, RCMP Records, RG 18 (acc. 85-86/048) 34/G-809-8-1941.

¹⁷ Larsen, Memo to the RCMP Commissioner, 13 November 1957, LAC, RG 18 (acc. 85-86/048) 14/G-577-14/supp "G".

¹⁸ Larsen, *The Big Ship*, 141.

¹⁹ Larsen, Memo to the RCMP commissioner, 15 November 1957, LAC, RG 18 (acc. 85-86/048) 14/G-577-14/supp "G".

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ O.D. Skelton, "Secret" letter, 12 April 1940, from the Under-Secretary to the Acting Deputy Minister of National Defence (Naval and Air), J.L. Ralston, with enclosures of two reports dated 10 and 11 April 1940: "The Position of Greenland," and "Canada, Greenland, and the Monroe Doctrine," LAC, Records of the Department of National Defence, RG 24/3919/1037-6-111.

²² O.D. Skelton, Memo to file, "Greenland," on meeting between King, Roosevelt, and Hull, 2 May 1940, LAC, RG 25/273112671-40/1.

²³ Department of National Defence, Memorandum to Chief of General Staff, Chief of Naval Staff and Chief of Army Services from Military Secretary, 2 May 1940, LAC, RG 24/3919/1037-6-111.

²⁴ E. Reid, copy of memo to the Prime Minister from Canadian Legation in Washington, 6 May 1940, LAC, RG 25/27311267J-40/1.

²⁵ A. Eden, Letter to Canadian High Commissioner, 2 May 1940, with reference to previous letter 15 April 1940, outlining scale of probable attack and suggested defensive measures, LAC, RG 25/27311267J-40/1; Department of External Affairs, "Proposals for a Canadian Policy Relating to Greenland," 6 May 1940, RG 25/273112671-40/1; and Department of External Affairs, Memorandum on a meeting held in the office of American-Danish Greenland Commission in Washington, 22 May 1940, LAC, RG 25/273112671-40/1.

²⁶ This file contains multiple memos, telegrams and reports related to the vulnerability of Greenland after the fall of Denmark, the plans for a Canadian occupation force, discussions with the U.S. State Department regarding access to cryolite production, appointment of a Canadian Consul and Vice-Consul to Greenland and subsequent events. The sequence of events can be pieced together from numerous documents from 26 April through 6 May. Specific documents will be listed by dates or by their signature, Department of External Affairs Records, LAC, RG 25/2731/2671-40 (including file pocket), Pts 1-6.

²⁷ Department of External Affairs, Memorandum on a meeting held in the office of American-Danish Greenland Commission in Washington, 22 May 1940, LAC, RG 25/273112671-40/1.

²⁸ O.D. Skelton, correspondence with Governors Brun and Svane, of North and South Greenland respectively, 20 May 1940, LAC, RG 25/27311267J-40/1.

²⁹ Reid, Telegram to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, 3 June 1940, LAC, RG 25/27311267J-40/1.

³⁰ O.D. Skelton, "Memorandum for the Prime Minister," 14 May 1940, LAC, RG 25/273112671-40/1.

³¹ Department of External Affairs, Telegram and memo from the Canadian Legation in Washington, 3 June 1940, concerning a meeting called by Assistant U.S. Secretary of State Adolf Berle, LAC, RG 25/27311267J-40/1.

³² United States Government, *The Congressional Record – Senate*, 6 June 1940:11707-11722.

³³ Department of External Affairs, Aide Memoire from the Department of State, Washington, 6 June 1941, LAC, RG 25/27311267J-40/6.

³⁴ Larsen, RG 18 (acc. 85-86/048) 14/G-577-14/supp “G”.

³⁵ Fripps, Memo from Commanding Officer of “E” Division to the RCMP Commissioner, 22 April 1940, RCMP Records, RG 18 (acc. 85-86/048) 34/G-809-8-1941.

³⁶ G.J. Tranter, *Plowing the Arctic: Being an account of the voyage of the R.C.M.P. ‘St. Roch’ through the North West Passage from West to East* (Toronto: Longmans, Green, 1945), 2.

³⁷ Larsen, n.d. (but from content appears to be mid- to late 1940s), RG 18 (acc. 85-86/048) 14/G-577-14/supp “G”.

³⁸ Larsen, Memo to the RCMP Commissioner, 15 November 1957, RG 18 (acc. 85-86/048) 14/G-577-14/supp “G”.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ F. Roots, Author’s personal correspondence from Dr. Roots, Science Advisor Emeritus, Department of the Environment, 14 August 1992.

12

Religious Fanaticism at Leaf River, Ungava, 1931

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Introduction

As a result of limited resources and perhaps the sensitive nature of the subject, incidents of religious fanaticism in the Eastern Arctic have been poorly documented in scholarly studies. There is one notable exception. Based on extensive field work from 1956 to 1971, anthropologist Bernard Saladin d'Anglure identified a number of occurrences in Northern Québec between 1920 and 1950. Describing these as “syncretistic religious movements”, he argued that “they are only truly understandable in terms of shamanism and traditional beliefs about identity, reincarnation, and possession.”¹ This statement provides impetus and context for this paper, which focuses on the investigation by a Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officer into reports of a new religious movement at Leaf River (Tasiujaq²) on the shores of Ungava Bay.

The RCMP *Annual Report* for 1931 blamed the fanaticism at Leaf River on misinterpretation of the Bible and suggested that Inuit actions were “silly rather than criminal.” It conceded, however, that “if left alone the movement might have degenerated into orgies such as those at [Home] Bay” a decade earlier. Leaf River had been visited by missionaries, one of whom had instructed the leading Eskimo, a man known as Miller, to exercise a general supervision over the little congregation. The perusal of certain parts of the Old Testament and of sundry religious books so excited this man that he took it upon himself to be the religious leader of the settlement, and played the part of a clergyman, constructing for himself a costume in imitation of the surplice, stole, etc. of a clergyman. He also devised flags, which were given to each [adult member] of the settlement, and caused all the inhabitants to sew patches of cloth and [red] ribbons on their clothes, in attempted compliance with a Mosaic Injunction to the Children of Israel.

He marched them about the settlement singing hymns. When they approached a house or an incoming sled they marched around it, causing some alarm to the white population by tapping the corners with a stick (...).³

This incident may have seemed “silly” to officials in Ottawa, but not to Ungava fur traders or to the investigating police officer, Corporal Finley McInnes.⁴ For McInnes, in particular, memories of the fanaticism-inspired murders at Home Bay would serve as a reminder of potential consequences.

Study of the Leaf River case has been greatly enhanced by the wealth of first-hand information available in the McInnes papers. The explicit descriptions of the rituals, symbols and ceremonies, together with sketches and photographs, provide important insights into the nature of this sensational, but short-lived, religious movement. The term “religious fanaticism” is employed here to refer to unorthodox Christian activities, usually driven by a forceful authority figure and often manifested in prophecies, delusions, hysteria, unusual rituals and/or strict taboos. Fanaticism is a universal phenomenon occurring throughout the world and involving a number of religions. While incidents among aboriginal peoples have followed Christian missionary instruction the world over,⁵ the reason for its apparent prevalence among the Inuit of Northern Québec is still open to conjecture and debate.

In police reports, one finds terms such as “mentally deranged”, “lunatic” or “insane” to describe Inuit involvement in fanatical religious movements.⁶ Inuit used similar terms to describe individuals who suddenly exhibited uncharacteristic behaviour, posing a threat to their family and community. In referring to religious fanaticism in general, Peter Pitseolak used the phrase “over-doing religion” to describe occurrences on southern Baffin Island.⁷ Anthropologist Christopher Trott⁸ employs the Inuktitut word *ukpirluaqtut* meaning “those who believe too much.” The use of these terms and their precise meaning rest in “the eye of the beholder” and should be considered perceptual rather than conclusive.

The Leaf River case must be considered in the context of similar incidents occurring elsewhere in the Eastern Arctic, with direct reference to Inuit spiritual beliefs and practices as understood at the time. The first half of the twentieth century was a transitional period that witnessed “the critical interface between two different concepts of religious beliefs, animism and Christianity.”⁹ Anthropologists have advanced a number of theories to explain the adaptive processes involved in Inuit acceptance of the Christian faith. Ernest S. Burch Jr., for instance, employed the concepts of “syncretism” and “indigenization” to describe the Christianization of Arctic Alaska. Citing Antonio Gualtieri, Burch explained indigenization as “(...) a process of cultural adaptation in which the

fundamental meanings of an historical tradition are retained but expressed in symbolic forms of another, diverse culture." Syncretism, on the other hand, was described as a "form of cultural encounter in which the traditions entailed are fused (...) into a novel emergent whose meanings and symbolic expressions are in some respects different from either of the original singular traditions."¹⁰

Other theories have been advanced to explain adaptation during the traditional years. In 1913, Vilhjalmur Stefansson coined the term "Eskimoized Christianity" to describe the Inuvialuit's acceptance of Christian beliefs.

(...) the Eskimo still believe in all the spirits of the old faith and in all its other facts, and they believe all the Christian teachings on top of that. They have not ceased to have faith in the heathen things, but they have ceased to practice them because they are wicked and lessen one's chances for salvation.¹¹

Saladin d'Anglure, on the other hand, described the situation in Northern Québec as an "uneven struggle" between the shamans and the missionaries, the latter believing shamanic powers to be "expressions of Satan." Although some shamans attempted "to integrate Christian elements with their shamanism", in the end "one after another submitted to White rule and were baptized."¹²

The first official reports of religious fanaticism in the Eastern Arctic followed the opening of new RCMP posts in the 1920s, yet Inuit oral history suggests that similar incidents occurred earlier and likely more frequently than indicated in government records. Until more information is available from taped oral history projects, resources for a more comprehensive study are limited. With the exception of anthropological studies, primary sources are randomly scattered in government archival files, or, as in the case of the Church of England's Arctic Diocese records, still unavailable to scholars. Secondary sources are generally unreliable because of a tendency to rely on sensationalism to sell books and newspapers.

Early mission publications seemed to ignore the existence of religious fanaticism, or if confronted with the consequences, denied any association with Christianity. Rev. John Turner, for example, wrote that the emergence of "false prophets" and related activities near Igloodik in 1946 were caused by "evil spirits", implying no fault of the Church or his teachings.¹³ Similarly, Rev. Maurice Flint denied that Christianity played any part in the 1941 episode on the Belcher Islands that ended in the deaths of three hunters and six children.¹⁴ Instead, he argued that just because "these people should use religious terms to excuse their conduct does not necessarily imply that they are religious people."¹⁵ From a missionary's perspective, it appeared that fanaticism was considered a product of paganism not to be confused with Christianity.

As a historian of Arctic policy and contact relationships, it is not my purpose to critique the teaching of Christianity or justify Inuit spirituality. Instead, within the context of history and of the knowledge available at the time, this paper examines the nature of the religious fanaticism at Leaf River and its demise in 1931. Theologians, Inuit and anthropologists may see points of greater significance to their interests and understanding; hence, I welcome further interpretation and comment.

Background

Although Moravian missionaries made brief reconnaissance visits to the Ungava region in 1811 and again in 1825, the first extended contact between Inuit and Qallunaat¹⁶ occurred in 1830 with the construction of a Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) post at Fort Chimo (Kuujjuaq). This was closed in 1842 and re-opened in 1866.¹⁷ The first attempt to bring Christianity to Ungava was by Rev. E. J. Peck, who visited Fort Chimo in the summer of 1884, en route to Liverpool via St. John's, Newfoundland.¹⁸ Another fifteen years elapsed before the arrival of Rev. Samuel M. Stewart¹⁹ at Port Burwell (Killinek) in 1900, and his subsequent establishment of a permanent mission at Fort Chimo in 1904. Stewart was reportedly proficient in Inuktitut and utilized Peck's syllabic translation of the Book of Common Prayer. Except for the usual trips 'outside', he apparently remained at Chimo until just prior to his retirement in 1930.²⁰

At the Chimo mission, and further south at Great Whale River, native catechists were taught and given syllabic Bibles to distribute among Inuit camps. In this manner, Christianity spread rapidly, even to the more remote communities. As Saladin d'Anglure explained:

After 1930 no shaman dared to proclaim himself as such in Arctic Québec. Most Inuit were baptized, although most of them had received only minimal instruction from catechists who interpreted the Bible very loosely. These catechists, often chosen for their strong personalities, somewhat resembled new shamans with authority from the Whites.²¹

The spread of Christianity by Native lay preachers also occurred on Baffin Island following the establishment, in 1894, of an Anglican mission on Blacklead Island in Cumberland Sound.²² Thus, when Rev. A. L. Fleming arrived at Lake Harbour in 1909, he discovered Inuit who were reading syllabic Bibles and professing to be Christians, even though he was the first missionary to visit the community.²³ Lay preachers were also responsible for the unusual behaviour of "Christianized" Iglulingmuit, who displayed white flags on their komatiks and greeted arrivals with a ritual of hymn singing and handshaking.²⁴

In contrast to efforts elsewhere, the Catholic Church made no attempt to gain a foothold in Northern Québec until the mid-1930s. The Moravians set up a post at Port Burwell in 1904, but it closed twenty years later and the buildings were sold to the Hudson's Bay Company.²⁵ Perhaps there was no competition for souls, but there was fierce rivalry for furs between the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) and Revillon Frères after the latter built posts at Fort Chimo (1903) and Leaf River (1905).

Historians generally agree that the fur trade was responsible for most socioeconomic adversities experienced by Inuit at this time.²⁶ At Chimo and Leaf River, however, competition between the two companies had moderated the impact. Not surprisingly, the Inuit in these areas were visibly more prosperous than those living near Port Burwell.²⁷ During the early depression years, competition also alleviated the effects of a declining fox population and lower fur prices experienced elsewhere.²⁸

The North West Mounted Police stationed at posts on the western shores of Hudson Bay had no jurisdictional powers in Northern Québec. Even with a broadened mandate in 1920, the police at the new Port Burwell²⁹ post were "only authorized to make patrols into Ungava in connection with the welfare of the Eskimos and the observance [of] the Migratory Birds Act."³⁰ Travel was further limited by dangerous waters and difficult terrain.

One of the earliest reported cases of religious fanaticism in the Arctic was described by a Moravian missionary, Dr. Augustus C. Thompson. In 1859, at Friedrichsthal, Greenland, a popular young Native claimed he had been told by God "that the end of the world had come." In spite of attempts by missionaries to intervene, the self-appointed leader and his followers conducted seances and a rematching of couples (*mumiksimaniq*) before climbing a nearby mountain barefoot to facilitate their transport to heaven. The next morning, with severely frost-bitten feet, they finally accepted the error of their delusion.³¹

At the turn of the century, another instance of fanaticism occurred in the southern Baffin region, described as "the first religious time" by Peter Pitseolak. According to stories told by the elders, in 1901 an Inuk named Keegak assumed religious leadership of his people, announcing he was "the big God" and would soon be going "up" to heaven. Others willingly joined in a religious frenzy of singing and dancing. At one point, Keegak and his wife were said to be "out of their minds" and were stopped just short of killing a man and woman. As the story goes, the couple had been expected to submit to beatings without protest, as Jesus had done when he was crucified.³² During the "second religious time", Pitseolak related how other settlements were affected by "over-doing religion", recalling how two women, described as self-appointed "saints", had convinced his grandmother to leave his adopted brother in the snow to die.³³

With the establishment of new Arctic police posts in the 1920s, it was natural that reports of violence multiplied. By 1923, however, the RCMP *Annual Report* warned that Inuit murders were reaching epidemic proportions.³⁴ In the Eastern Arctic, a number involved mistaken Christian beliefs or former lay preachers. In 1919, for instance, a former Inuk “missionary preacher” near Lake Harbour was said to have gone “crazy” and killed five Inuit, until finally shot by two HBC employees.³⁵ Religious fanaticism, *per se*, more often led to self-inflicted tragedy. Saladin d’Anglure described an incident in the early 1920s at Payne Bay, where Inuit believed the end of the world was imminent and killed their dogs while awaiting the arrival of Jesus. He also related another case arising on the east coast of Hudson Bay, where a catechist set off for Jerusalem by dog sled.³⁶

The first indication that religious fanaticism might become a major problem arose from a police investigation into three murders at Kevetuk³⁷, on Home Bay north of Cumberland Sound. In this instance, an Inuk named Neahkoteah (Niaquttiaq)³⁸, who was left in charge of a trading post, began to instruct the community on teachings of the Bible. He claimed “he was Almighty God and Jesus Christ, and possessed the power to do them good or evil.” Everyone was aroused to “a state of excitement bordering on insanity, with their passions fired to the point of committing any act suggested by Neahkoteah.”³⁹ In this state of mind, they willingly complied with his orders to kill two members of the group. Finally, a lone dissenter killed Neahkoteah just as he was about to bludgeon a kneeling woman with a hammer.⁴⁰

Corporal Finley McInnes, in charge of the Kevetuk investigation, submitted a five-page supplementary report explaining the circumstances that led to the murders. A number of Inuit stated Neahkoteah had previously suffered bouts of insanity and that the disease was hereditary in his wife’s family. McInnes believed more was involved than just insanity, stating that the “old shamanistic performances of earlier days have been paralleled, and brought to light as being insidiously woven into the proceedings during the time before the murders, and also after.” A number of shamanic rituals had taken place, including attempts to breathe life into the dead, licking a wound for healing purposes, circling a body clockwise “to direct its soul towards the heavens”, communal seances, public sexual acts, frenzied dancing and singing, and the sewing of pieces of paper to their clothes to ward off sickness and evil.⁴¹ One witness claimed that Neahkoteah had momentarily risen from the dead the day after his demise.⁴² McInnes argued that “the Kevetukmuit have never had the benefit of proper instruction in the elements of Christianity” and, as a result, reverted “to all the old customs.”

There is not the slightest suspicion of doubt, but that the introduction of Christianity to the Eskimo has been resultant in the loss of three

men's lives at Kevetuk, merely because it is incomprehensible to the untutored native mind, which can only think within the limited scope of a true native Eskimo mind.⁴³

As a police officer, he was also concerned that the "Kevetukmuit" might be aroused again to commit further violent acts.

Admittedly, Corporal McInnes held views that were not necessarily shared by his fellow officers. Expressing respect and empathy for the Inuit, on the one hand, he seemed equally cynical about the western world:

They [Inuit] are the most ethical, the most moral, the most communal people I know of. They have a quality of soul higher than that of any other race, a quality reached by this slow development and constant struggle (...) The Eskimo were better developed mentally than other people, and that in simplicity of life, honesty, generosity, provision for the young and the old, in absence of brutality, murder and wars, they had a higher system of philosophy than ours (...) But the Innuit too is corrupting under the influence of trade.

The Innuit attained through many centuries, perhaps thousands of years, of separation from other peoples, and without any of the softening teachings of Christianity, a Jesus-like code and practice which the custodians of Christianity have failed to impress on the millions of their normal adherents.⁴⁴

These were not idle thoughts or fleeting notions, but would be repeated in at least two reports, albeit with moderation and qualification. In 1934, writing in a special report to the RCMP Commissioner:

It is impossible for a white man to think, and reason as an Eskimo. They are not mentally deficient, but better developed mentally, than what is generally known, in all matters pertaining to their simplicity of life, honesty, generosity, and provision for the young and old. The Eskimo's [sic] have their faults, but in comparison with ours, it is possible they have a better philosophy than the white race.⁴⁵

McInnes's views and bias are important in understanding his analysis of the situation, his strategy and his actions. Previous experience may explain the thoroughness of his investigation and detailed record of his observations. The contents of his personal library suggest an ongoing curiosity.⁴⁶

RCMP investigation into the "Religious insanity" at Leaf River⁴⁷

News reached the Port Burwell police in February 1930 that a severe flu epidemic had struck the Chimo area the previous September and had taken several lives. Apparently, Rev. Stewart had already left the post, as only the HBC staff were reported to have administered to the sick.⁴⁸ That summer, the supply

ship forwarded a personal letter for Corporal McInnes, now in charge of the Port Burwell detachment. Dated 12 March 1930, an HBC trader from Leaf River described an unusual situation:

The Natives around here are a bum crowd, & at the present time are all crazy over religion. They are led by a fellow called Miller, & the antics all of them go through would qualify at least two thirds for the bug house.

When they come into our place to trade, some of them refuse to accept goods given with the left hand, & just before they go off, all the men walk round our house singing hymns, & performing mysterious gestures as if exorcising some evil spirit inside our humble dwelling. What the devil they do that for God only knows, for there ain't no "spirits" of any kind inside this house.⁴⁹

Since the letter remained among McInnes's personal papers and without a mention in his year-end report, either he had not considered the situation serious or he realized he had no authority to intervene on Québec soil.⁵⁰

Next March, while on a routine patrol from Port Burwell, McInnes arrived at George River (Kangisualujjuaq), where he received reports of "religious insanity" at Leaf River and a message from the HBC district manager at Chimo, requesting police assistance.⁵¹ Having one dog team and accompanied only by a young Inuk, McInnes decided to send the lad back to Burwell with a message explaining his delayed return. From George River, he relied on local guides to take him on to the Whale River Post. Here, he learned that a number of Inuit were "taking to this new faith," that they wore decorations made from red ribbons to signify the blood of Christ, and that the converts were exhibiting disrespectful behaviour towards the fur traders.⁵²

At Chimo, McInnes received a warm welcome from the HBC district manager, Mr. McGibbons. Lengthy discussions with employees of both trading companies revealed further details of the new religious movement, led by an Inuk named George Miller. Particularly unnerving was their marching around the traders' houses and sleds, waving their distinctive flags, and all the while singing hymns. Miller had reportedly ignored requests to halt the ritual marches and other offensive practices. When warned that the police might come, the Inuit leader declared that he would defy them. There were also rumours that two Leaf River women were to be stoned to death because they were barren⁵³ and that two sons had threatened to beat up their father if he refused to join the movement.⁵⁴ Three days later, McInnes left for Leaf River, accompanied by the HBC district inspector, the company clerk and an Inuk guide.

Upon arrival at Leaf River on March 28th, the party learned that Miller was away and not expected back for several days. Later that evening, McInnes and

the fur traders were in deep discussion in the living room of the HBC manager's house, when they heard singing in the distance. The voices grew louder as the Inuit approached the house; "they marched around it three times, and as they passed each corner a number of light knocks was given [sic], during all this time they kept up the singing." Without knocking, Miller entered the house and strode into the living room, leaving the others to watch from the kitchen doorway. In a loud voice, he announced, "I have arrived." He then greeted each man with a handshake. McInnes responded with "a very reserved greeting" and stared at him "straight in the eye." After they ignored him and resumed their conversation, Miller approached McInnes and announced that "a long time ago I was going to Hell, but now I am going to Heaven." Still receiving no response, he took out a large red handkerchief from his pocket, folded it, then with a flip shook out the folds, like a conjurer performing a "sleight of hand" trick. He repeated this several times as if it was a ritual.

Miller then announced he was "happy" and went over to the gramophone, put on a record, took the company clerk by the arm and invited him to dance. When told there would be no dancing, he again repeated the ritual of shaking out the handkerchief, before spreading it out on the floor and lying down beside it, with his elbow on the cloth and his hand supporting his head. At this point, McInnes walked out of the room, hoping to give the impression that he was not interested. Miller soon departed, informing those in the kitchen that "he wasn't frightened of the police, that they were the same as a child to him." A short while later, a messenger arrived to say that Miller would like to show the policeman his "robes of office." McInnes replied that he would see him in the morning.⁵⁵

Miller arrived the next day with a metal box under his arm, accompanied by his prompter/advisor, Georgie-Jo-An-As. There was a striking change in his manner. Gone was the arrogance displayed the previous night. Instead, he seemed more like a child seeking approval, as he described the contents of the box. There were four mats of equal size, approximately 24 by 24 inches square, made of red cotton calico print. At the centre of the first mat was a plain white circle, 4 inches in diameter, representing the sun. The second mat had two pieces of contrasting-coloured cloth sewn in a semicircle to depict a rainbow. The third had a white square in the centre to symbolize a throne; the fourth a white star, said to be "the new star" recently seen in the skies over Leaf River.⁵⁶ McInnes sketched the designs in his pocket diary.

Miller then displayed his personal flag, which was approximately 48" by 38" and made of different colours of cotton print sewn together in squares and strips. A number of symbols decorated the flag, including a "T"-shaped piece and a star. When asked to explain their meaning, Miller appeared confused, as did Georgie-Jo-An-As. Finally, the religious leader pulled out his robes and donned them in

the following order: first a loose red cotton robe with sleeves; then a slightly shorter white gown placed over the red; a long black scarf hung around the neck in clerical style; and finally, a long strip of yellow cloth wound around his head like a turban. After disrobing, Miller announced he must depart to prepare for a church service but invited McInnes to come and “see how good he was.”⁵⁷

The service was held in a native house belonging to Revillon Frères, in a low-ceilinged room approximately 10 by 15 feet. When McInnes and Mr. Carson (the HBC post manager) approached the building, a woman walked toward them, passed them on the right and circled back to follow them to the house, singing continually. As they reached the door, she indicated they were to circle the building before entering. McInnes ignored her and walked directly inside. Here, he was met by Miller, who showed the two visitors to their seats.

At one end of the room, a few feet from the wall and in the middle of the floor, was a stove. At about two feet distance from the stove, set in a circle around it, were the four mats that Miller had shown me previously.

At the opposite end of the room, was Miller dressed in his robes, and in front of him was a large box, with a white cloth covering it (this represented an altar or pulpit). On this box he had a number of religious books in the Eskimo language.

Three long scarfs or girdles were tied together and placed on the floor in a half circle around Miller (probably representing a chancel rail in a church).

The congregation consisted of men, women and children who stood in a semicircle on two sides of the room; two men and two women were dressed in loose white gowns worn over their regular clothes, as if they were “deacons and deaconesses.” All the adults wore a strip of 4” by 12” cloth looped around their right wrist.⁵⁸

The service opened with a hymn. At its end, the congregation waved the small banners tied to their wrists, then circled round the room, solemnly shaking his hand as they passed by Miller. The same ritual was repeated at the end of every hymn. McInnes could not help noticing Miller’s large finger ring, since his gestures seemed to deliberately draw attention to it. There was a short baptismal ceremony with a woman and child coming forward to have a few drops of water sprinkled on the baby’s forehead. When Miller asked the child’s name, the mother replied, “whatever you wish.” After the service, McInnes took a number of photographs of the congregation with their flags and of Miller in his robes.⁵⁹

After the photo session, McInnes gathered everyone together and lectured them on the “foolishness” of their practices and the errors of their ways. The singing and circle marches must stop; they must not enter a Qallunaaq’s home

without first knocking or play his gramophone without first asking permission. He told Miller that he “had no right to be wearing robes when he was holding a service, also that he could not baptize children, that was done only by the Missionary.” The Inuit argued that they had learned what to do from the Bible and wanted to show him the passages. McInnes replied that this could wait until he returned to Chimo with Miller, at which time he wanted to ask more questions in the company of a “good interpreter.”⁶⁰

McInnes then told the gathered Inuit that they must have misunderstood the meaning of the Bible, and that from now on they must ask only the missionary to explain the passages they did not understand. Referring to rumours that the police would send them to “hell” if they were caught, he explained that

(...) the Police could not send them to Hell, but if they did not stop their present performances and act the same as other Eskimos, the Police would take them away, lock them up, and keep them on little food, giving them no tea or tobacco.⁶¹

They were questioned about the prophecy that heavy rains would flood the settlements at Chimo and Leaf River. Emily, identified as the prophetess, denied having seen a vision or a dream, claiming instead that she had learned about the flood from the Bible.⁶² McInnes noted in his diary that Emily pretended she did not understand English and acted “mentally deranged.”⁶³

After the discussion, several came forward to thank McInnes for setting them straight. Miller thanked him for pointing out his error in playing the manager’s gramophone without asking. McInnes, however, was neither surprised nor made hopeful by this apparent acquiescence, noting that Inuit often appear to accept what is said, without understanding the meaning. He was uncertain about “how much or how little” to explain to an Inuk, “even through a good interpreter”, but believed it was the missionaries’ responsibility to explain the Bible, not the police.

Two hunters, who had not wanted to join the new faith, came forward to ask if the police could return with the supply ship that summer, just to check on things. McInnes knew it was futile to try and explain why it was impossible because Leaf River was in Québec.⁶⁴ At some point, he must have wondered if he too had exceeded the limits of his jurisdiction.⁶⁵

The next day, as the HBC traders were preparing for departure to Payne Bay, McInnes watched a dozen Inuit, led by Miller, singing and circling one of the sleds, “three times.” The others stopped when they saw McInnes, but Miller continued on to the next sled, hesitated, walked back and forth, then raised his hands as if about to pray, then wandered off. It was understandable that McInnes thought “it was too much to expect that the Leaf River Eskimos will quit their present performances.”⁶⁶

Aware that he was to accompany the policeman back to Chimo, Miller asked for permission to go hunting for caribou first. McInnes agreed but warned that he must be back by April 9th, so they could travel south with the others, when they returned from Payne Bay. While waiting, McInnes spent the time gathering more information: about the group, their religious activities and in particular, their leader. Miller, he learned, was a good hunter and generous in sharing with others. Thus, when Rev. Stewart had made him a lay preacher in May 1929, no one challenged his new authority. His initial efforts to instruct the people were "sincere", and for a while "it worked well." Then rivalry grew between Miller, Georgie-Joe-An-As and Isaac, when Isaac began to instruct a separate bible study group. "Miller, to hold his position had to bring in new ideas", such as the decorative symbols. Apparently, these were Miller's invention and only he could give permission to add new ribbons or designs. Evenings and mornings were spent in long services accompanied by hymns and prayers, so much so that they were "beginning to neglect their hunting and daily work."⁶⁷

Because the Inuit normally "live a very peaceful and quite ordinary life", McInnes wondered whether the excitement they derived from the new faith helped "to break the monotony of their lives."⁶⁸ McInnes was concerned about Miller's arrogance and the disrespect shown towards the fur traders. He had heard that "the Leaf River Eskimos had the worst reputation in the District of Ungava, or along Hudson Strait." McInnes agreed that the Ungava Inuit were "a different character than those on Baffin Island", possibly because of the much longer contact with the fur traders and because they were bolder and less respectful of the Qallunaat. He thought the Leaf River Inuit were particularly "hard to deal with", because of the competition that encouraged the traders "to pamper" the Inuit, and it was natural they would "take advantage of this."⁶⁹

Unlike the Kevetuk report, McInnes made no direct reference here to shamanism or traditional spiritual beliefs. Yet the evidence was there for informed readers. As one example, he related an incident where an Inuk had found "a crow in a trap he had set for a fox" and that "he felt sorry as the crow looked so much like an angel, that he let it go", even though it was "not the nature of an Eskimo to have pity for a dumb animal or bird."⁷⁰ McInnes gave no explanation why he included this incident, but a handwritten list of 'Inuit spirits', found in his notebook⁷¹, suggests he was aware the crow was important to Inuit culture. The last item read as follows:

Segook. This spirit has a head like a crow and a body like a human being, and is black and has wings. It does good and brings meat to the Eskimo in its beak. It eats the eyes of deer and seals.⁷²

The list included five other spirits: Sedna, Ooluksak, Tekkitserktok, Kingoatseak and Keekut, along with a short description for each. Although

implicit in his detailed observations, McInnes avoided any direct reference to shamanism or spirituality, as he had made in his Kevetuk report.

When Miller failed to return as promised, McInnes recorded his disappointment, but he was relieved when Miller appeared the next day. Having failed to return on time, Miller would be required to use his own dogs and sled for the trip to Chimo. McInnes also explained that Isaac would be accompanying them, to serve as witness and report back what had taken place. This was particularly important if it was decided to remove Miller to Port Burwell.⁷³

At Fort Chimo, McInnes gathered together Miller, Isaac, two local members of the movement and Tommy Gordon, the HBC interpreter. From Miller's carefully worded answers, it was clear that he had decided to defer respectfully to police authority, taking care not to admit to any spiritual beliefs or practices.⁷⁴ McInnes's first questions seemed designed to establish whether Miller respected police authority and whether he could be trusted to follow instructions.

Question: "Did you ever see the Police before?"

Answer by Miller: "A long time ago I saw one at Port Burwell, when I was there in a boat."

Question: "What do you think of the Police, are you frightened of them?"

Answer: "I do not think anything of the Police except that I wanted to see them, to get information from them, I would like to know what is right."

Q.: "Why did you delay a day in arriving at Leaf River, when I gave you the date on which to arrive?"

A.: "I went caribou hunting and was delayed due to stormy weather. I tried to arrive on time."

Q.: "At Leaf River when you saw me you told the Eskimos that you were not frightened of the Police, that they were the same as a child to you?"

A.: "Yes I told the people that I was glad to see the Police and that they were like a child to me" (interpreted that Miller looked on the police in the same manner as a father looks on a son).

Q.: "When did you start to instruct the Leaf River Eskimos?"

A.: "It will be two years this coming May."

Q.: "Why have you got those ribbons on?"

A.: "I put them on because I got the idea from the Bible" (Book of Exodus, Chapter 39).

Q.: "What do they mean?"

A.: "I do not know what they mean."

Q.: "On arriving at a post or dwelling, why do you sing at the same time walking around the building?"

A.: "We walk around the building singing to show how happy we are."

Q.: "When walking around the house at Leaf River why did you tap the corner of the house?"

A.: "When I walked around the house, I just tapped the corner with a small stick in a manner of greeting the Police."

Q.: "When Rev. S. M. Stewart visited you some time ago, what did he tell you?"

A.: "He told us to keep on with the books and to have a service every morning and night."

Q.: "What name do you call yourself?"

A.: "Miller Na-bark-toe-oo-wong-ah Peter-roo-see" (interpreted to mean, Miller, I am the Tree, Peter-ro-see).

Q.: "Why do you say you are the tree?"

A.: "I took the name because I was a boss", (or one of authority).

Q.: "Who else is a preacher at Leaf River?"

A.: "Isaac, and Georgie-Joe-An-As."

Q.: "Why do you preach at Leaf River?"

A.: "A long time ago I was bad, I want to be good, I want to go to Heaven" also "The people I try to keep them better, to pay their debts, and lead them in a better life."

Q.: "Do you understand the books you have?"

A.: "They are very difficult to understand and I can only read slow."

Q.: "What books have you got?"

This question was answered by Miller showing the following books:
The Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan, translated into Eskimo by Rev. Chas. Schmitt.

The Book of Genesis, published by the British and Foreign Bible Society.

Also portions of *The Book of Common Prayer* by Rev. E. J. Peck
(Miller also had more books and illustrated papers at Leaf River)

Q.: "Where do you find in the books about the singing and the wearing of the coloured ribbon on your clothes?"

Answered by Miller showing him Chapters 29 and 39 of *The Book of Exodus*⁷⁵.

Q.: "Can you read it to me?"

(Miller was unable to do this except by puzzling each word out. He then passed the book over to Isaac, who read the passages quite fluently, but in a flippant manner).

Q.: "I heard that the Leaf River Eskimos were going to stone two women because they were barren."

A.: "I never heard anything about two women going to be stoned to death."

According to the police report, "this last question was addressed to each Eskimo in turn, and each denied it." Even the Inuk, who allegedly reported the rumour to the fur traders, now disavowed any knowledge of the incident when questioned separately.⁷⁶ If McInnes suspected the Inuit were covering up, he gave no indication in his report. He noted, however, that it was difficult to get information "as the whole proceeding had been more or less puerile."⁷⁷

Prior to the Chimo meeting, McInnes had given considerable thought to possible alternatives in dealing with Miller and his followers. The Leaf River traders had advised him that if "Miller was the only one taken away, one of the other Eskimos would carry on the same performance." McInnes explained to them that he did not wish to take either Miller or Isaac back to Burwell. Not only would they be an expense to the government, but "their wives and families would have to be provided for." Although admitting that "up to the present, no violence has been committed", he was convinced the situation would worsen if left unchecked.⁷⁸ The only solution was to bring an end to the new religion. The question was how.

There were also considerations of comprehension and communication. Based on past experience, McInnes argued that "it is very difficult to explain anything in regards matters that they are not familiar with." Furthermore, "how much and how little to tell an Eskimo is hard to decide, as they are liable to go from one extreme to the other."⁷⁹ Thoughts written in his notebook around this time provide further clues to his dilemma:

At the back of the Eskimo mind, although seldom expressed, is a feeling of superiority over the white man, and a belief we can show them nothing in connection with their country and animals which they do not know. There is also a latent fear of us, deadened by contact, reduced by fair treatment, and almost turned into contempt by overfamiliarity, but always in existence [sic].

They have a strong opinion that we should not interfere [sic] too much in their affairs, and we should not unless necessary. I have formed the opinion that reasoning with the Native is almost impossible, some will go far [to] oblige you, but in vital matters I think it will be found that

we will in the future have to rely on that fear of us of which I have spoken.⁸⁰

In this case, however, McInnes believed that fear alone was not likely to have the desired effect because of their strong sense of martyrdom.

In his final discussion, McInnes first suggested that the Inuit were not to blame if they erred in their interpretation of the Bible. He suggested that “as they were grown men, they found it difficult to read and understand the Bible. If they had learned from childhood, they would understand better.” An older Inuk from Chimo agreed that this was so. Avoiding reference to their spiritual beliefs, McInnes went on to describe in positive terms how they could become good Christians:

They were told to live the same as the other Eskimos, to read the Bible, have their prayer service, but not to puzzle over anything they did not understand. When they read something that puzzled them, they were to forget about it, and wait till a missionary visited them and could ask him for an explanation.

They were each asked in turn if they did not know right from wrong. They all said they now knew when they did wrong. They were also told, as they were grown men, that it was better for them to set an example of themselves for the younger people to follow, etc.⁸¹

Ever so subtly, McInnes had shifted the onus of responsibility from the Inuit to the missionaries.

As the discussion continued on, McInnes seemed less tolerant of Miller's mistakes, reminding him again that “he had no right to be wearing gowns or baptising children. The only ones [who] could do those things were the Missionaries.” When asked if there were any questions, Miller wondered if they had to remove all the decorations. The reply was “yes, if they had anything to do with the new faith. If they had decorations on their clothes for appearance, it was all right.” When asked what he would do if allowed to go back to Leaf River, Miller replied that “he was finished and that they would quit all their previous performances as he knew now what was right.”⁸²

McInnes then appealed to Miller's pride and honour by saying that because of his previous reputation as a fine hunter, who looked after his people and took good care of his dogs and equipment, he was willing to let him return home if he gave “his word that on return to Leaf River, he would quit all this foolish performance, tell the Leaf River people that they had made a mistake, and await the arrival of a proper missionary to instruct them from the Bible (...) Otherwise, he would have to come to Port Burwell.” Miller solemnly gave his word on a handshake. As a final warning, McInnes said that if any of the others continued their foolish ways, “at ship time the Police would come and whoever was

implicated, man or woman, would be taken away and locked up at Port Burwell.”⁸³

The suggestion of imprisonment was not an idle threat. McInnes reported he had left instructions with the HBC district manager, that in the event of further trouble, he was to employ the offenders at the Chimo post until the supply ship arrived to transport them to Port Burwell. He was also instructed to send word if he required further police assistance.⁸⁴ The fact that McInnes warned he would remove “man or woman” indicates he may have suspected that the women, perhaps the prophetess Emily in particular, might be reluctant to follow his instructions. How he intended to “imprison” them without a jail is open to speculation.⁸⁵

McInnes concluded that “it seemed safe to leave the Eskimos at Leaf River and await further circumstances or instructions”, because there were presently three Qallunaat at Leaf River and they would be joined shortly by four prospectors. He recommended, however, that the police should return to Leaf River the next year, to provide moral support for the traders.⁸⁶ In the last paragraph, McInnes gave vent to his angst when he wrote that “it is too much to expect that the Leaf River Eskimos will quit their present performances, although they promised faithfully they would (...) [but] as they relinquished everything when spoken to, they gave me no opportunity of having sufficient excuse to warrant me taking any of them to Port Burwell.”⁸⁷ His apprehension of whether he had made the right decision was understandable. Should violence erupt following his departure, he would be held responsible. Otherwise, it was now up to the missionaries to ensure that the Inuit were properly instructed in the teachings of Christianity.

As events played out, the Inuit heeded his advice and kept their promise. In the summer of 1934, on the lawn of the Pangnirtung police detachment, Corporal Finley McInnes was awarded the RCMP Jubilee Medal for his role in resolving the problem at Leaf River. In retrospect, perhaps Miller and his followers also deserved recognition for keeping their word.

The media and other interpretations

When the CGS *Beothic* arrived at Port Burwell to pick up Corporal McInnes and other travellers returning south on leave, it carried two journalists, Harry Porter and Douglas Robertson, both of whom had accompanied the Eastern Arctic Patrol that summer. Within days of the ship’s arrival in port, *The Halifax Herald* carried a photograph and article by Porter about the “religious insanity” at Leaf River.⁸⁸ He explained that the story had been told to him by “a Hudson’s Bay Company representative” he had met at Port Burwell, with “the main facts” provided by the investigating RCMP officer, who was “loath to talk” until he

had submitted his report. Parts of the story were accurate, especially the details about the church service, the ritual marches, the symbols decorating Inuit clothing, and their flags. Other parts were fictitious, but sensational journalism sold papers.

According to Porter, the husband of a woman about to be stoned to death had travelled over 500 miles by dog sled to get help from the police at Port Burwell. Corporal McInnes was reported to have returned with him the same day, "just in the nick of time" to save the woman from death as "the stoning was about to commence." The headline read "Read bible backwards and bloodshed feared by Eskimo women." Although Miller was branded as the instigator, everyone was said to have "become more and more hysterical" over the winter and "felt that they had been literally commanded by God to stone all barren women." By now, "the childless women had become half insane." Other papers, such as the *Family Herald and Weekly Star*, picked up the story, some adding further embellishments. Robertson, the second reporter aboard the Eastern Arctic Patrol ship, later wrote a relatively accurate account of the incident,⁸⁹ but by then the exaggerated stories were accepted as fact by the Canadian public. In 1936, the story gained international attention when it appeared, along with a photograph, in the *National Geographic*.⁹⁰

Sensationalism seemed to inspire further flights of imagination, the most extreme by a former RCMP officer who appropriated the story to fit with his own experiences at Port Burwell four years earlier. In this instance, former Constable Sidney Montague recounted how he had been confronted by a troop of Inuit bearing "tattered banners" and "armed to the teeth with their rifles, drawn hunting knives, and one or two with harpoons", all the while singing "Onward Christian Soldiers." The story goes on to relate how the "sadistic group lined up eight women and were prepared to stone the creatures" to death for being childless. Allegedly, Montague had arrived on the scene to find that a young missionary had rescued the women and had hidden them in one of the buildings.⁹¹ No doubt stories like these made exciting reading during the Depression, but they created grossly inaccurate impressions about the Inuit of Northern Québec.

The question arises as to why the police made no attempt to deny these stories. One possible explanation might relate to the limited jurisdiction of the RCMP in the province of Québec. Rumours of threatened violence against Inuit women would have justified police intervention on their behalf and also exempted the Hudson's Bay Company from criticism for requesting assistance. For both governments, it was convenient if the Canadian public believed the situation required more missionaries rather than costly policing or educational services.

Years later, a more positive depiction of the religious leader appeared in an autobiography by Dudley Copland, who had been appointed the HBC district manager for Ungava in 1932. Copland described Miller as honest and loyal to the HBC, “a good man, a man of strong personality but much misunderstood.” He then related a scene witnessed in the summer of 1933:

That same summer I got to know a man named Miller or Napaktook (the Tree) who had a reputation as a self-styled prophet in the best Biblical tradition. Miller was a heavily built, dark-skinned Inuit with a small black beard. He had worked out a new interpretation of some of the Old Testament stories, and with his ideas and compelling personality had attracted a group of followers. Miller had re-christened himself Peter Napaktook and had a stylized tree embroidered to the back of his parka so that he could be singled out as ‘Peter the Tree’. Two years earlier, he had attempted to put one of his religious ideas — the stoning of barren women — into practice, and had gotten into trouble with the church and the police. Now he concerned himself only with a form of personal evangelism. I was at the wharf one evening when, clothed in a white flowing robe, he poled his schooner out into the stream. Then in a fine strong voice he sang one verse of an old hymn. It was an impressive performance.⁹²

Others had a slightly different version of the outcome. In a 1933 patrol report⁹³, Corporal Stafford noted that Rev. Gibbs had arrived at Fort Chimo to take charge of the Anglican Mission. Referring to the Inuit who had “suffered from religious mania” at Leaf River, he reported that it “seems to have all passed away, although I was given to understand by Natives that Eskimo Miller still tries to practice his religion when there are no white men around, but has lost all his following.” When Stafford visited their camp, he “found them to be in good health, but completely out of food.”⁹⁴

Peripheral to the story was a passage in Rev. A. L. Fleming’s memoirs about meeting “Neparktok”, whom he described as a shaman or angakok who “had become a Christian only after much travail of soul.”⁹⁵ He related how Neparktok talked about “some of the old customs which had a definite religious meaning”, how the stars were “little holes in the floor of the upper world” and each star “the eye of a spirit looking down”, and how animals and birds such as the “raven, had powerful spirits and these must be treated with deepest respect or trouble would ensue.”⁹⁶ The fact that Fleming’s “Neparktok” was described in 1914 as having a “wrinkled, weather-beaten face” and residing on the northern shores of Hudson Strait^{97,98} suggests that he was not the same “Peter Napaktook” of Leaf River fame. The photographs taken in 1931 clearly showed Miller to be a relatively smooth-faced, middle-aged Inuk. However, if he had indeed “rechristened

himself" Napaktook, as stated by Copland, it is significant that he had chosen the name of a converted shaman for his 'rebirth'.

Fanaticism, shamanism and syncretism

Measured against more frenzied manifestations of religious hysteria, as occurred at Kevetuk, the behaviour of the Leaf River Inuit seemed rather benign according to the police reports. Yet Corporal McInnes was convinced that the new religion would lead to violence if allowed to continue. Although he reported no evidence of fanatical delusions, sexual taboos or mass hysteria, he may well have suspected they existed. One significant delusion did exist, according to Saladin d'Anglure. During his field studies, he learned that Miller's wife was alleged to have died and then been brought back to life, an event that was interpreted to mean that "the apostles had taken Inuit form."⁹⁹ This 'act of possession', an accepted phenomenon in shamanism, adds critical insight into the nature of the movement. Not only does it explain how the women had incited the men, but it suggests a comparison to shamanic practices and the central role often played by the shaman's wife.¹⁰⁰ This insight also affirms that some aspects of the Leaf River movement can only be explained in terms of Inuit spirituality and shamanism.

In stark contrast to the Kevetuk affair, however, the evil spirits appeared to reside with the Qallunaat rather than among the Inuit. Given the hysteria and illogic that often accompany fanaticism, the traders were likely justified in their concerns about the ritual circle marches and increasingly defiant behaviour of the Inuit. By contemporary understanding, these actions might be seen to represent a form of power struggle between the Inuit and the fur traders, an attempt by the Inuit to reassert their "identity and self-determination."¹⁰¹ Yet in the context of Inuit comprehension at that time, their actions were more likely motivated by fear of the Qallunaat and possibly related to the 1929 influenza epidemic.

According to traditional beliefs, disease was caused by evil spirits. For some Inuit, to die of illness in a house or tent meant one's soul "must first go down to Takanalukarnaluk under the sea, and do penance for their sins."¹⁰² Fear was inherent in Inuit lives: fear of cold and starvation; of Qallunaat and the spirits; of the souls of dead humans and animals; and, most of all, fear of illness and suffering as a fate worse than death.¹⁰³ The circle marches and the taboo of refusing to accept an item passed by the left hand were likely means to protect the Inuit from evil spirits.

In the 1920s, Knud Rasmussen had observed a similar circling of his sled upon arrival at a Netsilik community. The objective, he was told, was "to ward off any possible danger" from the evil spirits which might have accompanied the visitor, by binding them "in a 'magic circle' to prevent them from harming the

Inuit.”¹⁰⁴ McInnes, in his report on the Kevetuk murders, described the practice of circling to the right three times as having precedence in shamanic rituals.¹⁰⁵ In his Leaf River report, the same connection is implicit when he recounted how a dozen Inuit had circled the departing trader’s sled “three times.”¹⁰⁶

To date, there is no evidence that Miller had ever been a shaman or was attempting to become one. Yet, to suggest that shamanism played no active role in the ‘new religion’ would deny its centrality in Inuit spirituality. McInnes’s reasons for ignoring the connections to shamanism are unknown. Given his respect for the Inuit and criticism of Qallunaat who failed to understand them,¹⁰⁷ McInnes may have hoped to avoid public criticism of the Inuit as primitive pagans.

Symbolism was also central to the practice of the new faith. Worn in a manner similar to amulets in the past, symbols were proudly displayed on the outer garments of the men and women. They also adorned the church vestments and the flags carried by the congregation. Some were linked to Christianity, such as the St. George’s cross on the flags carried by the women and the decorative red ribbons and tassels on their clothing, said to represent the blood of Christ.¹⁰⁸ Similarly, the ladder-like motifs on the men’s parkas were described as a “ladder to go to Heaven”,¹⁰⁹ likely referring to Jacob’s ladder of the Old Testament.

Other symbols derived from spiritual beliefs. The sun, for instance, was commonly described as the sister image of the moon, perhaps explaining its profusion on women’s clothing and noticeable absence on the men’s parkas and flags. According to Norman Hallendy¹¹⁰, symbols such as the “rainbow, halo, star, shooting star, etc. are in fact shamanic devices.” The rainbow or *kataujaq* represents “the ‘healing arch’ under which the shaman passed his patient for healing”.¹¹¹ This symbol appeared on one of the mats used for church services, and perhaps in the unique arch-like design on Miller’s kamiks. According to the descriptions on the backs of the original photographs, halos were apparently worn by at least two men and “made from two pieces of ribbon sewn on the parka, running from one shoulder across to the other [and] returning across the back.”¹¹²

While the Leaf River movement began as a sincere attempt to adhere to Christian teachings, as evident in the Bible readings, baptismal service and hymn singing, other practices such as the ritual circle marches and the use of shamanic symbols on the church vestments were too contradictory to be dismissed simply as “over-zealousness” or “misinterpretation of the Bible.” Considering the degree to which Inuit spiritual beliefs and the basic tenets of Christianity were integrated into the new religion, the concept of ‘syncretism’ — the converging of two religions to produce a unique variant that differs from the originals — aptly describes the character of the Leaf River movement.

Although syncretism is useful in understanding the nature of the new movement, it does little to explain its origins and popularity. The suggestion that the economic adversities of the 1930s might have motivated religious mania¹¹³ does not fit with the Leaf River experience. Not only had competition between the rival trading companies moderated the decline in fur prices, but the HBC trader at Leaf River reported that foxes were plentiful in 1930, albeit somewhat difficult to trap owing to an overabundance of lemmings.¹¹⁴ There were other factors involved. As noted above, it is questionable whether the new religion would have spread so widely and rapidly had it not been for the departure of Rev. Stewart, the absence of a police presence and the rivalry between Miller and Isaac. The 1929 influenza epidemic may have acted as a catalyst to inspire more fanatical behaviour. Perhaps of greater significance were the factors in common with outbreaks of fanaticism in Southern Baffin and Keveutuk; the delegation of authority to Inuit lay preachers; the distribution of syllabic Bibles; the presence of a charismatic leader; and the supportive role played by the women in the community.

The rapid spread of the new faith suggests that it likely fulfilled certain needs and aspirations. Belonging to a religious group with a distinctive Inuit identity would have a personal appeal because of its blend of the new and old, *i. e.*, the promise of “life after death” while still retaining familiar spiritual beliefs. The use of symbols and rituals added an aura of mystique and excitement. Fear of exclusion and ostracism would provide negative reinforcement. Financial constraints and geographical determinants deterred adequate missionary supervision. Overall, the religious fanaticism at Leaf River appeared motivated by a complex set of circumstances that led to a unique blending of Inuit spiritual traditions and Christian beliefs.

Conclusions

If one accepts that no religion is static but evolves according to the needs of the believers and the conditions of the world they live in, then the new religion at Leaf River was not only a source of excitement and celebration, but unconsciously it may have fulfilled a need to give a distinctive Inuit identity to Christianity. Had this particular religious movement continued unchecked, it may well have culminated in mass hysteria, accompanied by violence.

The Leaf River movement involved too many Inuit spiritual practices to be described as ‘over-zealous Christianity’, although it might fit Peter Pitseolak’s broader definition of “over-done religion.” From outward appearances, the new faith was clearly syncretic in nature and flourished in the temporary absence of missionary supervision. The unusual manifestations, however, can only be explained by a number of circumstances unique to Leaf River: the rivalry between

two lay preachers; the women who incited them; and the charismatic, imaginative leader who had rechristened himself Peter Napaktook. Together, they created a fertile environment for the interjection of traditional spiritual beliefs into their rudimentary knowledge of Christian practices. The result was a sensational, but short-lived, episode of religious fanaticism.

Acknowledgements

I am particularly indebted to Andrea Zupko, granddaughter of former RCMP Corporal Finley McInnes, for allowing unlimited access to his personal papers, diaries and photographs. A grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council contributed significantly toward the sorting, cataloguing, duplicating and storage of this material for eventual placement in an appropriate archive. My grateful appreciation is also extended to archivist Doug White and the reading room staff at the National Archives of Canada for their assistance in my ongoing research over the past decade, and to Chris Trott for information on the Anglican missions. A very special thanks to Glenn Wright, formerly of the Historical Division of RCMP Headquarters in Ottawa, for his ongoing support.

Notes

The McInnes papers and photographs have been sorted and placed in archival folders and boxes, and a proper finding aid prepared. They are presently housed in Trent University Archives with restricted access, awaiting final word from his granddaughter concerning placement in an appropriate archival repository.

¹ Bernard Saladin d'Anglure, "Inuit of Quebec" in *Handbook of North American Indians*, Vol. 5: *Arctic*, ed. David Damas (Washington: Smithsonian Institute, 1984), 503-504.

² Although Inuit communities in the Eastern Arctic are now commonly known by their Inuktitut names, the anglicized versions are used in this paper to conform with 65-year-old sources. Inuktitut spellings are derived from the 1995 map produced by the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada.

³ Royal Canadian Mounted Police, *Annual Report for year ending September 30, 1931* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1931), 81.

⁴ Born on 22 August 1893, Finley McInnes was a veteran of World War I, where he spent 28 months in a German POW camp after his capture at Ypres in June 1916. In November 1919, at the age of 26, he joined the Royal Northwest Mounted Police at Fort Macleod and was promoted to Corporal the following year. He applied for northern service and in September 1922, he and two others joined Staff Sergeant H. A. Joy at Pond Inlet to build the first RCMP post on Baffin Island. The following spring, he led a police patrol to the Igloodik area to collect

witnesses for the Janes murder trial. Following the trial, he, along with Inspector Wilcox and two others, were detached to Pangnirtung to set up yet another detachment. That winter, McInnes was put in charge of the inquiry into the Kevetuk murders at nearby Home Bay. He returned to Pond Inlet in September 1924, where he remained as the Officer in Charge (OIC) for the next two years. In June 1927, he was attached to the Hudson Strait Expedition at Nottingham Island for a year, then sent directly to Port Burwell as OIC, where he remained until September 1931. In 1932, he returned to Pangnirtung, again as OIC for three years. He retired from the Force in January 1936.

⁵ Christopher Trott, "The rapture and the rupture: Religious change amongst the Inuit of North Baffin Island," *Études/Inuit/Studies* 21, no. 1-2 (1997): 209-228.

⁶ "Re: - Eskimos who have become mentally deranged through instructions on Christianity by Eskimo Miller and other lay preachers at Leaf River, Province of Quebec, South West Corner of Ungava Bay," McInnes to Officer Commanding RCMP Headquarters Division, 5 May 1931, Series A, box 1, file 14, Finley McInnes Collection; "Re: - Patrol to George River, P.Q. and Patrol to Leaf River to investigate religious insanity amongst the Eskimo's [sic] at Leaf River, South West corner of Ungava Bay," McInnes to Officer Commanding RCMP Headquarters Division, 7 May 1931, Series A, box 1, file 14, Finley McInnes Collection.

⁷ Peter Pitseolak and Dorothy H. Eber, *People from Our Side: A Life Story with Photographs and Oral Biography* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 40-43.

⁸ Trott, "The rapture and the rupture."

⁹ Norman Hallendy, "Takurluk: Observing unusual things," *Information North, Newsletter of the Arctic Institute of North America* 21, no. 3 (1995): 2.

¹⁰ Ernest S. Burch Jr., "The Inupiat and the Christianization of Arctic Alaska," *Études/Inuit/Studies* 18, no. 1-2 (1992): 100.

¹¹ Vilhjalmur Stefansson, *My life with the Eskimo* (New York: Macmillan, 1913), 421.

¹² Saladin d'Anglure, "Inuit of Quebec," 503.

¹³ Maurice S. Flint, *Operation Canon: A short account of the life and witness of the Reverend John Hudspeth Turner* (London: The Bible Churchmen's Missionary Society, 1949).

¹⁴ Alan Sullivan, "When God came to the Belchers," *Queen's Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (1944): 14-28.

¹⁵ Flint, *Operation Canon*, 63.

¹⁶ Although not in common usage in the 1930s, the Inuktitut word for the white man, Qallunaat, will be used here, as will Inuit instead of Eskimo.

¹⁷ Diamond Jenness, *Eskimo Administration: II, Canada* (Montreal: Arctic Institute of North America Technical Paper no. 14, 1964), 8.

¹⁸ Arthur Lewis, *The Life and Work of the Rev. E. J. Peck Among the Eskimos* (London: Stoughton, 1905).

¹⁹ Samuel Milliken Stewart was born in Northern Ireland and studied at Queen's College in St. John's, Newfoundland, and Emmanuel College in Saskatoon. His Ungava mission was sponsored by the St. John's Colonial and Continental Church Society.

²⁰ H. A. Seegmiller, "Ungava's Stewart," *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society* 10, no. 2 (1968).

²¹ Saladin d'Anglure, "Inuit of Quebec," 503.

²² A. E. Millward, *Southern Baffin Island: An Account of Exploration, Investigation, and Settlement During the Past Fifty Years* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1930), 23.

²³ A. L. Fleming, *Archibald the Arctic: The Flying Bishop* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1956), 51-53.

²⁴ "Report on 'Patrol to Igloolik and Hecla and Fury Str. April 25, 1923,'" 1923, Series A, box 1, file 10, Finley McInnes Collection.

²⁵ Carol Brice-Bennett, ed., *Our Footprints Are Everywhere: Inuit Land Use and Occupancy* (Nain: Labrador Inuit Association, 1977), 91.

²⁶ Lee E. Weissling, "Inuit Life in the Eastern Canadian Arctic, 1922-1942: Change as Recorded by the RCMP," *The Canadian Geographer* 35, no. 1 (1991): 59.

²⁷ Royal Canadian Mounted Police, *Annual Report for 1931*, 83.

²⁸ W. C. Bethune, *Canada's Eastern Arctic: Its History, Resources, Population and Administration* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1934), 60, 62-64.

²⁹ Port Burwell was situated on Killinek Island off the tip of Labrador, just within the boundary of the Northwest Territories.

³⁰ Royal Canadian Mounted Police, *Annual Report for 1931*, 81.

³¹ Augustus C. Thompson, *Moravian Missions: Twelve Lectures* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1883), 209.

³² Pitseolak and Eber, *People from Our Side*, 43.

³³ Pitseolak and Eber, *People from Our Side*, 68-69.

³⁴ Royal Canadian Mounted Police, *Annual Report for year ending September 30, 1923* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1923), 20.

³⁵ "Sgt. J. E. F. Wight to Officer Commanding with attached report by John Hayward," 5 July 1926, RG18, vol. 3313, file 1925-HQ-1180-C2, National Archives of Canada.

³⁶ Saladin d'Anglure, "Inuit of Quebec," 503.

³⁷ Kevetuk is spelled here as it appeared in the original police investigation reports. Kivitoo and Keveetoo were also commonly used.

³⁸ "Neahkoteah" was used here, as it appeared in police reports, to avoid confusion in direct quotations. Niaquittiaq is the proper Inuktitut spelling.

³⁹ "Testimony of witnesses to the Kevetoo murders," March 1924, Series A, box 1, file 11, Finley McInnes Collection; "Notebook entries and correspondence with RCMP headquarters concerning the Home Bay Patrol and the murder of three Inuit at Kevetoo," 1924, Series A, box 1, file 11, Finley McInnes Collection.

⁴⁰ "Re ... Murder of three Eskimos at Home Bay, Baffin Island," Sgt. H. A. Joy to Officer Commanding RCMP Headquarters Division, 5 May 1923, RG18, vol. 3293, file 1923-HQ681-G-5, National Archives of Canada; "Re:...Eskimo murder of three Eskimo's [sic] at Kevetuk, Home Bay, Baffin Island, N.W.T.," Finley McInnes to Officer Commanding, 22 April 1924 and related correspondence, RG18, vol. 3293, file 1923-HQ681-G-5, National Archives of Canada; Royal Canadian Mounted Police, *Annual Report for 1923*, 35; Royal Canadian Mounted Police, *Annual Report for year ending September 30, 1924* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1924), 52-55.

⁴¹ "Re:...Eskimo murder of three Eskimo's [sic] at Kevetuk, Home Bay, Baffin Island, N.W.T.," Finley McInnes to Officer Commanding.

⁴² "Re ... Murder of three Eskimos at Home Bay, Baffin Island," Sgt. H. A. Joy to Officer Commanding RCMP Headquarters Division.

⁴³ Testimony of witnesses to the Keveetoo murders, March 1924, Series A, box 1, file 11, Finley McInnes Collection.

⁴⁴ McInnes's personal notebook, written between 1927-1936, includes miscellaneous information, thoughts, sketches, Series C, box 3, file 3, Finley McInnes Collection. Although this particular passage is undated, it appears in a personal notebook that covered events dating from 1927 to 1936.

⁴⁵ "Purchasing of articles from Hudson's Bay Company at Pangnirtung," report to RCMP Commissioner from Corporal McInnes, 22 June 1934, Series A, box 1, file 15, Finley McInnes Collection.

⁴⁶ Information about his library collection was obtained from his daughter (1996), and from an earlier conversation with his widow (1982). Books he read during his first decade in the Arctic appear to have included Elisha Kent Kane's *Arctic Adventure* (1857); C. F. Hall's *Arctic Researches* (1865); Isaac Hayes's *The Open Polar Sea*; Augustus Thompson's *The Moravians* (1883); R. E. Peary's *Northward over the Great Ice* (1898); A. P. Low's *The Cruise of the Neptune 1903-1904* (1906); Captain Bernier's *Cruise of the Arctic - 1910* (1911); and Stefansson's *My Life with the Eskimo* (1913). After his posting at Port Burwell (1928-1931), McInnes acquired other books, including Knud Rasmussen's *Across Arctic America* (1927), Diamond Jenness's *The People of the Twilight* (1928) and a book apparently given to him by Jenness called *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art, and Custom, volume II*, by Edward B. Taylor (1903).

⁴⁷ This section is largely narrative, derived primarily from two lengthy reports by McInnes, dated May 5th (twelve pages) and May 7th (thirteen pages), typed, single-spaced, on legal-size paper. Diary entries were used for additional information. The first report contains detailed observations and analysis of the incident. The second report provides details of the patrol and the communities visited, with only a brief outline of the situation at Leaf River.

⁴⁸ Royal Canadian Mounted Police, *Annual Report for year ending September 30, 1930* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1930), 75.

⁴⁹ F. R. Mason (HBCo employee at Leaf River Post) to Finley McInnes, 12 March 1930, Series A, box 1, file 14, Finley McInnes Collection.

⁵⁰ Royal Canadian Mounted Police, *Annual Report for 1930*, 20.

⁵¹ "Re: - Eskimos who have become mentally deranged through instructions on Christianity by Eskimo Miller and other lay preachers at Leaf River, Province of Quebec, South West Corner of Ungava Bay," Finley McInnes to Officer Commanding RCMP Headquarters Division, 1.

⁵² "Re: - Eskimos who have become mentally deranged through instructions on Christianity," Finley McInnes to Officer Commanding RCMP Headquarters Division, 1.

⁵³ "Re: - Eskimos who have become mentally deranged through instructions on Christianity," Finley McInnes to Officer Commanding RCMP Headquarters Division, 2.

⁵⁴ "Re: - Patrol to George River, P.Q. and Patrol to Leaf River to investigate religious insanity amongst the Eskimo's [sic] at Leaf River, South West corner of Ungava Bay," Finley McInnes to Commanding Officer RCMP Headquarters Division, 9.

⁵⁵ "Re: - Eskimos who have become mentally deranged through instructions on Christianity," Finley McInnes to Officer Commanding RCMP Headquarters Division, 2-3.

⁵⁶ "Re: - Eskimos who have become mentally deranged through instructions on Christianity," Finley McInnes to Officer Commanding RCMP Headquarters Division, 4.

⁵⁷ "Re: - Eskimos who have become mentally deranged through instructions on Christianity," Finley McInnes to Officer Commanding RCMP Headquarters Division, 4.

⁵⁸ "Re: - Eskimos who have become mentally deranged through instructions on Christianity," Finley McInnes to Officer Commanding RCMP Headquarters Division, 5.

⁵⁹ "Re: - Eskimos who have become mentally deranged through instructions on Christianity," Finley McInnes to Officer Commanding RCMP Headquarters Division, 6.

⁶⁰ Although McInnes was fairly proficient in speaking Inuktitut, his ability to translate syllabics was limited. Moreover, only through a trusted and experienced interpreter could he be certain that his instructions were accurately translated and fully understood.

⁶¹ "Re: - Eskimos who have become mentally deranged through instructions on Christianity," Finley McInnes to Officer Commanding RCMP Headquarters Division, 6.

⁶² “Re: - Eskimos who have become mentally deranged through instructions on Christianity,” Finley McInnes to Officer Commanding RCMP Headquarters Division, 6.

⁶³ Diary entries and miscellaneous notes and drawings, 28 March to 2 May 1931, Series C, box 3, file 2, Finley McInnes Collection.

⁶⁴ “Re: - Eskimos who have become mentally deranged through instructions on Christianity,” Finley McInnes to Officer Commanding RCMP Headquarters Division, 7.

⁶⁵ Royal Canadian Mounted Police, *Annual Report for 1931*, 81.

⁶⁶ “Re: - Eskimos who have become mentally deranged through instructions on Christianity,” Finley McInnes to Officer Commanding RCMP Headquarters Division, 7, 12.

⁶⁷ “Re: - Eskimos who have become mentally deranged through instructions on Christianity,” Finley McInnes to Officer Commanding RCMP Headquarters Division, 10-11.

⁶⁸ “Re: - Eskimos who have become mentally deranged through instructions on Christianity,” Finley McInnes to Officer Commanding RCMP Headquarters Division, 11.

⁶⁹ “Re: - Eskimos who have become mentally deranged through instructions on Christianity,” Finley McInnes to Officer Commanding RCMP Headquarters Division, 11-12.

⁷⁰ “Re: - Eskimos who have become mentally deranged through instructions on Christianity,” Finley McInnes to Officer Commanding RCMP Headquarters Division, 11.

⁷¹ The sheet of paper had been folded in four to fit into his pocket diary and was well worn on the edges and corners as if it had been carried on patrol.

⁷² A page of notes found loose in McInnes’s notebook, listing and describing a number of Inuit spirits, Series A, box 1, file 2, Finley McInnes Collection.

⁷³ “Re: - Patrol to George River, P.Q. and Patrol to Leaf River to investigate religious insanity,” McInnes to Officer Commanding RCMP Headquarters Division, 7-8.

⁷⁴ The following transcripts of the interview were edited only to remove typographical errors and grammar/punctuation faults. Otherwise, they appear here as written, with McInnes’s own notations appearing in brackets.

⁷⁵ Chapters 29 and 39 describe Moses’s injunction to the Children of Israel concerning the holy garments for their priests and other articles of worship.

⁷⁶ “Re: - Eskimos who have become mentally deranged through instructions on Christianity,” Finley McInnes to Officer Commanding RCMP Headquarters Division, 8-9.

⁷⁷ “Re: - Eskimos who have become mentally deranged through instructions on Christianity,” Finley McInnes to Officer Commanding RCMP Headquarters Division, 7.

⁷⁸ "Re: - Eskimos who have become mentally deranged through instructions on Christianity," Finley McInnes to Officer Commanding RCMP Headquarters Division, 12.

⁷⁹ "Re: - Eskimos who have become mentally deranged through instructions on Christianity," Finley McInnes to Officer Commanding RCMP Headquarters Division, 11.

⁸⁰ McInnes's personal notebook.

⁸¹ "Re: - Eskimos who have become mentally deranged through instructions on Christianity," Finley McInnes to Officer Commanding RCMP Headquarters Division, 9.

⁸² "Re: - Eskimos who have become mentally deranged through instructions on Christianity," Finley McInnes to Officer Commanding RCMP Headquarters Division, 9.

⁸³ "Re: - Eskimos who have become mentally deranged through instructions on Christianity," Finley McInnes to Officer Commanding RCMP Headquarters Division, 10.

⁸⁴ "Re: - Eskimos who have become mentally deranged through instructions on Christianity," Finley McInnes to Officer Commanding RCMP Headquarters Division, 12.

⁸⁵ While there was no jail at Burwell, on one occasion McInnes used an abandoned Moravian mission to house an epileptic brought to the detachment for observation because his family believed he was insane and a threat to their lives. Otherwise, there is no record of any offender having been detained at Port Burwell (see reports in F. R. Mason (HBCo employee at Leaf River Post) to Finley McInnes; "Re: - Eskimos who have become mentally deranged through instructions on Christianity," Finley McInnes to Officer Commanding RCMP Headquarters Division; "Re: - Patrol to George River, P.Q. and Patrol to Leaf River to investigate religious insanity," McInnes to Officer Commanding RCMP Headquarters Division).

⁸⁶ "Re: - Eskimos who have become mentally deranged through instructions on Christianity," Finley McInnes to Officer Commanding RCMP Headquarters Division, 12.

⁸⁷ "Re: - Eskimos who have become mentally deranged through instructions on Christianity," Finley McInnes to Officer Commanding RCMP Headquarters Division, 12.

⁸⁸ H. W. Porter, "Read Bible backwards and bloodshed feared by Eskimo woman," *The Halifax Herald*, 21 September 1931, Series B, box 2, file 18, Finley McInnes Collection.

⁸⁹ D. S. Robertson, *To the Arctic with the Mounties* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1934).

⁹⁰ L. J. Burpee, "Canada's awakening North," *National Geographic*, June 1936, 749-768.

⁹¹ Sydney R. Montague, *North to Adventure* (New York: National Travel Club, 1939), 136-137.

⁹² A. Dudley Copland, *Copland: Chief Trader, Hudson's Bay Company, 1923-1939* (Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer, 1985), 157-158.

⁹³ Cpl. Stafford had attempted a patrol to Leaf River in 1932 but had injured himself and was forced to return to Port Burwell.

⁹⁴ "Ungava Bay Patrol," report by Corporal Stafford, 24 April 1933, RG85, vol. 588, file 623, National Archives of Canada.

⁹⁵ Fleming, *Archibald the Arctic*, 188.

⁹⁶ Fleming, *Archibald the Arctic*, 188-189.

⁹⁷ Fleming, *Archibald the Arctic*, 188.

⁹⁸ There is a possibility that Fleming's widow, when editing the Bishop's memoirs, may have taken literary license with the chronology. As noted earlier, secondary sources should be treated with caution.

⁹⁹ Saladin d'Anglure, "Inuit of Quebec," 503.

¹⁰⁰ Jaarich G. Oosten, "Male and female in Inuit shamanism," *Études/Inuit/Studies* 10, no. 1-2 (1986): 125.

¹⁰¹ Susanne Dybbroe, "Questions of identity and issues of self-determination," *Études/Inuit/Studies* 20, no. 2 (1996): 40.

¹⁰² Knud Rasmussen, *Across Arctic America: Narrative of the Fifth Thule Expedition* (London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1927), 30.

¹⁰³ Rasmussen, *Across Arctic America*, 130-131.

¹⁰⁴ Rasmussen, *Across Arctic America*, 178-179.

¹⁰⁵ "Notebook entries and correspondence."

¹⁰⁶ "Re: - Eskimos who have become mentally deranged through instructions on Christianity," Finley McInnes to Officer Commanding RCMP Headquarters Division, 7.

¹⁰⁷ "Reports from Pangnirtung, June 22, June 25, and July 31, 1934," 1935, Series A, box 1, file 15, Finley McInnes Collection.

¹⁰⁸ "Re: - Eskimos who have become mentally deranged through instructions on Christianity," Finley McInnes to Officer Commanding RCMP Headquarters Division.

¹⁰⁹ Eight photographs by Corporal McInnes # 6185-6192, with notations on the reverse side, 1931, Indian and Northern Affairs Collection, National Archives of Canada.

¹¹⁰ Currently Director of the Tukilik Foundation and a Research Associate of the Arctic Institute of North America.

¹¹¹ Norman Hallendy, personal communication with the author, 1996.

¹¹² Eight photographs by Corporal McInnes # 6185-6192.

¹¹³ Saladin d'Anglure, "Inuit of Quebec," 503.

¹¹⁴ F. R. Mason to McInnes.

13

Canadian Justice in the Eastern Arctic, 1919-1939

Presented at the Law for the Buffalo, Law for the Musk Ox Conference, 2-5 April 1997, University of Calgary.

In 1922, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) warned that “an epidemic of murderous violence” had occurred among the Inuit of the Canadian Arctic, a people whom they once considered to be “kindly and docile.” Thirteen individuals were reported killed, three of them white men (Qallunaat). Nine Inuit had been arrested, and more cases were under investigation. In the opinion of the police, “a grave feature of the situation [was] the number of white men who have fallen victims to the violence of these people,” although it was also noted that “the deaths of ten Eskimos amount to a serious proportion in so scanty a population.”¹ For the Department of Justice, the situation demanded firm action to restore law and order. For the Department of the Interior, one particular case presented a unique opportunity to show the world that Canada was fulfilling the legal obligations required to maintain sovereignty over the Arctic Islands.

Two well-publicized jury trials took place the next summer, each involving separate judicial parties imported from the south. The first took place in July, at Herschel Island in the Western Arctic, where an Inuk by the name of Alikomiak was found guilty of murder and sentenced to hang for shooting RCMP Constable W.A. Doak and fur trader Otto Binder. In addition, four others were on trial for slaying fellow Inuit. One received the death sentence and another, a year’s “hard labour” on a reduced charge of manslaughter. Two were acquitted. In late August, a second trial took place, this time at Pond Inlet in the Eastern Arctic. Three Inuit were tried for the murder of a white fur trader, Robert Janes. Nookudlah was found guilty of manslaughter and sentenced to ten years at Stony Mountain Penitentiary. One of his accomplices received a reduced sentence for

manslaughter, to be served as two years of “hard labour” at the police post. The other was acquitted for lack of clear evidence.²

From outward appearances, there seemed to be consistency in the government’s strategy and judicial process aimed at educating the Inuit in the principles of Canadian justice.³ The success rate, however, was uneven. In 1925, the police reported there were no further incidents of crime in the Eastern Arctic, but that “the reign of violence” continued along the western arctic coast.⁴ Over the next dozen years, seven additional trials were held in the Western Arctic, but none in the east.⁵ The fundamental question asked here is why? Were there fewer crimes reported in the Eastern Arctic, or were there other factors limiting the number of trials? Historical differences in contact relationships may explain regional variations in the number and character of violent crimes, but closer study of cases in the Eastern Arctic suggests there were other factors affecting the government’s decisions to prosecute.

Research for this paper relied heavily on archival resources for reports of criminal investigations, witness testimonies, coroner’s inquests, trial proceedings and relevant correspondence. Newspaper accounts, as well as taped interviews with former RCMP officers and Inuit elders, added important perspective and detail.⁶ Secondary sources furnished important background material, particularly with respect to cross-cultural and legal interpretations. Together, they provided critical insight into police methods and the criteria used to determine how justice would be implemented.

In theory, the evolving strategies and policies during the 1920s and 1930s were designed to achieve the same objective throughout the Arctic, i.e., to bring about Inuit acceptance of Canadian laws and justice. In practice, they were applied unevenly, and in the Eastern Arctic, seemingly justified at times by contradiction.

Background

Partial explanation for the uneven distribution of violence in the Canadian Arctic can be traced to the history of contact relations between Inuit and Qallunaat. Whalers had arrived early to the Eastern Arctic and their stay was prolonged (1820-1915) compared to the intense, but short, duration of whaling in the Western Arctic (1889-1908).⁷ The protracted period of contact allowed for a gradual growth of mutual respect that increased as Scottish and American whalers began to depend on Inuit labour to man the small boats, assist in rendering the blubber and provide food and skin clothing. Permanent stations were built at strategic locations, as early as the 1840s in the Cumberland Sound region, the 1860s on the western shores of Hudson Bay, the 1870s on the

northern shores of Hudson Strait, and later along the northeastern coast of Baffin Island.⁸

When the whaling industry declined towards the end of the 19th century, many shipowners maintained their stations as trading centres for ivory, seal skin, fur and fish, thus moderating any disruption in Inuit lives during the transition to a fur-trapping economy. Inuit were also employed in occasional mining operations, as pilots for government expedition ships and as guides for prospectors and surveyors. As a result, there was a ready and willing work force to meet the needs of the new arrivals in the 20th century. In northern Quebec, there were no major changes in the economic or social fabric since Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) posts had been established in Ungava since the 1830s, primarily for trade in fish, furs and, to a lesser degree, whale oil from the small belugas.⁹

In the absence of a permanent police presence prior to the 1920s, a mutually acceptable form of 'frontier justice' prevailed in the Eastern Arctic, allowing for peaceful co-existence between whalers, traders and Inuit. Although the Qallunaat had superior weapons, each had means to control the other: either by withdrawal of trade goods, or refusal to supply food, skin clothing and labour. Over time, the Inuit learned discipline, deference and respect for the Qallunaat.¹⁰ In the process, basic ground rules were established. According to one Inuk elder, it was understood that trouble would follow if they killed a white man.¹¹ Most traders, on the other hand, actively supported the Inuit custom of executing those who posed a danger, as it was also in their own interest to be rid of any potential menace in their midst.¹²

In the Western Arctic, the whalers arrived much later (1890), followed shortly by missionaries and, on their heels in 1903, the North West Mounted Police (NWMP). Because of the short season, the American ships set up permanent bases on Herschel Island, just northwest of the Mackenzie Delta. The Inuit were soon decimated by epidemics and gradually replaced by migrant Alaskan Inuit, who were more resistant to disease and familiar with the ways of the Qallunaat through their prolonged contact with Russian and American traders.¹³ By comparison, the 'Copper Inuit' residing to the east of the Mackenzie Delta, in areas adjacent to Coronation Gulf and Bathurst Inlet, had little or no contact with Qallunaat until well into the 20th century. It was among these people, estimated at around 700, that six Qallunaat and forty Inuit were reported murdered between 1910 and 1920.¹⁴ Their reliance on traditional means to control social behaviour partly explains the continued "reign of violence" in the region.

For centuries, Inuit used various means to modify unacceptable behaviour among their people: ostracism, derision, gossip, public confession, banishment

and, as a last resort, execution.¹⁵ By Birket-Smith's interpretation, "the mission of the society was to execute law and justice, but exclusively to restore peace."¹⁶ Thus, if an Inuk's actions became deviant and menaced others, and if they did not respond to other means of control, then he or she was considered to have gone "mad," providing just cause for their life to be terminated.¹⁷ In such cases, execution required approval by others and careful planning to catch the victim when he was most vulnerable.¹⁸ By British standards, such actions clearly constituted pre-meditated murder; by Inuit values, the consensual agreement legitimized the action. Equally at odds with British justice was the Inuit belief that "insanity" provided a justifiable reason for killing a person, compared to the Qallunaat practice of pleading insanity to absolve responsibility for one's criminal actions. Even the objectives of social control differed in the two societies, as explained by Allan Patenaude:

Traditional Inuit legal sanctions differed from their Western counterparts as they generally sought to resolve conflict and restore order through the correction and aid given to the offender. Western legal sanctions, on the other hand, sought to punish the offender and deter further transgressions through such punishment.¹⁹

Execution was a last resort, considered as protection for the living rather than retribution or a deterrent.

Not all Inuit murders were planned in advance with communal consent. As historian William R. Morrison explains, "in aboriginal Inuit groups, even temper was prized, and bad temper was regarded as a serious threat, not only to the individual, but to the whole band." In this context, "if a man spoke harshly to you, he had it in his mind to kill you, and it was thus entirely reasonable to defend yourself by killing him first."²⁰ In this case, only a member of the victim's family possessed the right to retaliate and seek revenge for a murder, a practice that often led to "blood feuds." These altercations seemed more prevalent in the pre-contact years or where contact with the Qallunaat was relatively minimal.²¹

Given the logic behind Inuit traditions, it was quite understandable that the Copper Inuit had killed two scientists, American Harry Radford and Ottawa-born George Street (1912), and two Oblate priests, Fathers Rouvière and Le Roux (1913), when they had become abusive and threatening. In the first case, no charges were pressed. In the second, a jury trial held in Edmonton in 1917 found the two accused 'not guilty.' When the verdict was appealed and the case retried in Calgary, they were found guilty of manslaughter and sentenced to two years' hard labour at a police post.²² To facilitate police patrols in the Coronation Gulf area, a new post was opened at Tree River in 1919. Alas, neither the lenient sentences nor attempts to instruct the Inuit on Canadian laws proved effective deterrents. In 1922, an RCMP constable and a fur trader were slain without

provocation by an Inuk under house arrest.²³ The death sentence by hanging, handed down at Herschel Island in July 1923, was only a qualified success. Although there were no more Qallunaat victims, the "reign of violence" among the Copper Inuit continued.

Although proportionately fewer and of a different nature, alleged murders were also reported among the Inuit of the Eastern Arctic. Most were approved by community members and involved a victim who was considered insane, thus a threat to the lives of others. Several were a consequence of religious fanaticism. In some cases, police and fur traders claimed the introduction of Christianity had caused 'religious insanity,' the result of obsessive study of the scriptures without the skills to properly interpret their meaning.²⁴

Unlike the experience in the Western and Central Arctic, Anglican missions arrived early to the Eastern Arctic, without competition, and long before the arrival of the police: at Great Whale River on the eastern shores of Hudson Bay in the 1870s, at Blacklead Island in Cumberland Sound in 1894, at Fort Chimo just inland from Ungava Bay in 1903, and at Lake Harbour on the northern shores of Hudson Strait in 1909. The Oblate missionaries arrived later to find that Christianity had already spread far and wide, largely a result of native catechists and their distribution of syllabic Bibles. The minimal supervision provided by the early missionaries led to the emergence of numerous syncretic movements which combined traditional spiritual beliefs with the new faith. These were sometimes accompanied by bouts of religious frenzy or fanaticism, and in a few cases, tragic deaths.²⁵ This particular phenomenon does not appear as prevalent in the Western Arctic, where competition between Catholic and Anglican missions was fierce and native catechists employed less frequently.

The presence of police authority may have facilitated reports of violent deaths, but these did not invoke serious investigation until the first reported death of a white man. Otherwise, the Mounted Police posts at Fullerton Harbour and Herschel Island were established to protect arctic sovereignty against intrusions by American whalers. As Richard Diubaldo pointed out, "The Inuit and their well-being were incidental."²⁶ Moreover, the Fullerton detachment and others established on the west side of Hudson Bay had no official jurisdiction over the Belcher Islands, northern Quebec or Baffin Island. As a result, there was no permanent police presence in the Eastern Arctic until the 1920s. At that time, sovereignty concerns were still the primary rationale for the new posts.

Based on new interpretations of international law, the Department of the Interior now conceded that British and Canadian discovery claims were no longer sufficient to maintain title but must be followed within reasonable time by evidence of "effective occupation." The situation was considered critical in 1920, as a result of the proposed explorations by Knud Rasmussen, funded by the

Danish government, and those of Captain Donald MacMillan, backed by American interests. As a consequence, new police detachments were planned for the Eastern Arctic to facilitate land patrols, enforce game regulations, collect customs and monitor activities of foreigners in the area. The proposed annual expeditions of the Eastern Arctic Patrol would build and supply the new posts, as well as conduct a variety of geological and scientific studies. A medical officer would provide assistance where possible.²⁷ The initial voyages were under orders to maintain strict secrecy until all the posts were built. Radio communications were brief and in code, with press releases carefully censored by department officials before distribution. These measures were considered essential because of "the importance of achieving certain results in connection with the maintenance of sovereignty in the north without attracting undue publicity."²⁸

In 1921, news of the alleged murder of a white fur trader near Pond Inlet provided an unexpected opportunity to show the world that Canada was effectively administering the remote and sparsely populated Arctic Islands. To take advantage of the situation, the planned location of the first High Arctic detachment was changed from Ellesmere Island to Pond Inlet. As William Morrison has suggested, "the administration of law in a criminal case, especially one of murder, is a dramatic symbol of sovereignty in action."²⁹

The permanent presence of police authority demanded a departure from the traditional practices governing Inuit social behaviour, some of which had been accepted, if not encouraged, by the early whalers and traders. For Inuit in the north and central areas of Baffin Island, the new laws seemed to require little more than learning a new set of rules. In return, they were rewarded with medical attention and welfare assistance. For those residing in Ungava and along the southern coast of Baffin Island, the situation was more complex, owing to the reluctance of some Hudson's Bay Company traders to give up their previous positions of authority.³⁰

Jurisdiction in the Ungava region was further complicated by the Quebec boundary extension in 1912. The Royal Northwest Mounted Police (RNWMP) had no jurisdiction within provincial boundaries, and the Quebec government made no attempt to police the area. Thus, prior to 1920, the only contact between the RNWMP and the Inuit of northern Quebec arose if an officer happened to be in transit aboard an HBC supply ship when it called at its Ungava trading posts.³¹ As a result, frontier justice prevailed, with the Hudson's Bay Company unofficially in charge.

In January 1920, an Order-in-Council authorized the expansion of police authority beyond territorial boundaries and a broader mandate which eventually would include responsibility for Inuit welfare. In recognition of this change, the Force was renamed the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and the first post in the

Eastern Arctic was constructed at Port Burwell on Killinek Island, adjacent to the northernmost limit of the Labrador-Quebec border, but just inside the Northwest Territories boundary. Because law enforcement was a provincial jurisdiction, police at the Burwell detachment were "only authorized to make patrols in connection with the welfare of the Eskimos, and the observance of the Migratory Birds Act."³² Although responsibility was argued in the context of 'provincial rights' and the status of Inuit citizenship, neither Quebec nor the federal government was willing to foot the bill.³³ Instead, judicial authority in Nouveau Quebec was conferred on the Hudson's Bay Company District Manager as a duly appointed Justice of the Peace, thus reinforcing the hegemony of the Company throughout Ungava.³⁴ Law enforcement and Canadian justice fell through the cracks.

The Belcher Islands, 1918-1921

The significance of the Eastern Arctic's first police investigation and coroner's inquest lay not in its drama or uniqueness, but in the opinion set down by the Deputy Minister of Justice at the time, Mr. E.L. Newcombe, and the use of this opinion as a precedent in later cases.³⁵

Reports of criminal violence on the Belcher Islands (Sanikiluaq) came to the attention of the Canadian government by a rather circuitous route. In April 1919, an employee at the Great Whale River post wrote to J. Thomson, the HBCo Fur Trade Commissioner at Winnipeg, concerning rumours that an Inuk had been murdered on the Islands the previous fall.³⁶ Thomson, in turn, passed the information on to the RNWMP Comptroller's office in Ottawa. Upon receipt of the report, the Acting Comptroller, L. du Plessis, denied any responsibility, claiming the Belcher Islands were in Quebec, thus outside RNWMP jurisdiction.³⁷ The report was then passed to authorities in Quebec. Another month went by before the Deputy Attorney General of Quebec, Charles Lanctôt, wrote to the Deputy Minister of Justice, E.L. Newcombe, reminding him that the Belcher Islands did, in fact, lie within the boundaries of the Northwest Territories and thus the responsibility of the Mounted Police.³⁸ Likely embarrassed by the error, RNWMP Commissioner A.B. Perry directed his Comptroller to prepare for an investigation, in spite of the high cost of outfitting a party.³⁹

On 6 August 1920, Inspector J.W. Phillips and Sergeant A.H. Joy left Haileybury, Ontario, and proceeded by canoe down the Missinaibi River to Moose Factory, where they picked up a chartered motor launch and crew to take them to the Belcher Islands. On arrival at the small Inuit community, they first exhumed and examined the remains of a two-year-old corpse, then carefully translated and recorded the testimony of ten witnesses. With Phillips acting as

Coroner, assisted by the boat crew and Sgt. Joy as witnesses, the inquest was reportedly carried out with decorum and solemnity. In summary, Ketautshook had forcibly abducted Ningeeoo, wife of Mukpooloo, and threatened to kill anyone who came after him. Fearing he would shoot them if they left camp, the others went for weeks without fishing or hunting. Threatened by possible starvation, the men met to discuss the matter and decided Ketautshook was insane and must be killed at the first opportunity. A young Inuk by the name of Tukautauk was chosen to fire the fatal shot.⁴⁰ The Coroner's report affirmed the sequence of events and declared "after careful consideration" that the victim "was killed for the common good and safety of the Band, consisting of fifty or more souls." Because it was the decision of a "male council," the report recommended that "no criminal charge be laid" but that "a responsible representative of the Government be sent amongst these people to instruct them in the laws of the country."⁴¹

The story might have ended there had the police not uncovered another incident during their investigations. A second inquiry began immediately upon completion of the first. In this case, a married man, Kookyauk, had run off with his wife's sister. When he returned, his first wife reported that he was threatening to kill anyone who tried to intervene. Only a small group met on this occasion and decided that the abductor should be tied up and placed alone on a nearby island until he promised to "change his ways." Witnessing that he had untied himself and was wandering about, four Inuit despatched themselves to the island and retied him in such a way that death by strangulation would occur in a matter of hours.⁴² This time the Coroner came to a different conclusion, reporting that the victim had died "at the hands of four persons...by being wilfully and maliciously tied with seal lines until death came by strangulation, without any just cause or apparent reason." The report went on to recommend that "the four persons named be directly held responsible," but that from a "humane standpoint," it was decided not to take the four men into custody at that time, as it would likely result in the starvation of the families.⁴³

In a separate report, Phillips suggested that a judicial party be sent the next spring, with contingency plans for the families, should the verdict demand removal of the four men from the island. In both cases, he noted, several witnesses had told him how the missionaries at Great Whale River taught them that it was "insane" to co-habit with a woman other than one's wife. Although it seems likely that "insane" was confused with "in sin," they argued that it was by "God's right" that these men were killed. Phillips believed "the question of morality...[was] impressed upon them too strongly by their spiritual advisors," implying that the blame for the crimes rested with the missionary for failing to teach the Inuit that murder was a more serious sin than bigamy.⁴⁴

Responding to Phillips's implied accusations, Rev. W.G. Walton of the Great Whale Mission wrote to the Commissioner, explaining that the Church was not to blame and that such violence was common among these people. As proof, he cited three incidents that had occurred during his tenure: "On one occasion nine persons were murdered, on another seventeen, and on a third, thirteen." What was seriously needed, he argued, was a hospital and doctor, along with a "duly qualified Magistrate" and a chief constable.⁴⁵ He had a valid argument, but neither the federal nor Quebec governments were willing to fund such initiatives. Ottawa believed law enforcement, like health and welfare, was a provincial responsibility, whereas Quebec officials claimed the Inuit were aborigines and thus, like the Indians, should be considered wards of the federal government.

Meanwhile, Deputy Minister Newcombe had written to Commissioner Perry to say that he was "afraid the Eskimos who were responsible for killing Kookyauk will have to be charged and tried for murder," and he asked for suggestions concerning the necessary arrangements for the trial.⁴⁶ By the following June, however, Newcombe had changed his mind after receiving a revised set of recommendations from Insp. Phillips, explaining why "the natives involved should not be brought to trial." He gave three reasons, with different emphasis than in his original report:

1st. The whole tribe is more or less involved, and in the event of their being punished would leave their families without support, necessitating the Government maintaining their families. Otherwise they would die of starvation.

2nd. I do not consider the natives of the Belcher Islands criminals at heart, and that it was clearly established they really believed Kookyauk to be deranged.

3rd. It is my belief that the investigation conducted by me at Belcher Island last year will have a beneficial and lasting effect on these natives.

I believe that if the natives of the Northern Districts of Canada are to be brought to a state of civilization the only solution is to have a permanent representative from the Indian Department established amongst them, or detachments of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.⁴⁷

In a three-page report to Commissioner Perry, Newcombe agreed with Phillips's argument that it would be inadvisable to remove the accused from their families but noted that the alternative of sending a tribunal to the Belchers would "be a very difficult and expensive matter." In his opinion, he thought it doubtful that the accused would be convicted, as the victim was killed by family consent

because he “did not conform to the conditions of life which were considered proper in the community and that he was regarded a source of danger.” Instead, he suggested that Insp. Phillips might visit the Belchers that summer and “assemble the natives to explain to them the elementary laws for the protection of life and property by which they are governed.”⁴⁸

Unfortunately, Insp. Phillips failed in his attempt to reach the Islands that summer, reportedly because of a “navigational accident” aboard the chartered HBCo boat, and he was unable to deliver the food and supplies he had promised. He was told by the Hudson’s Bay Company manager, however, that the Inuit had had a very prosperous fur catch that year, implying that any further intervention or assistance was unnecessary.⁴⁹

There were several precedents established in this case that reappeared in subsequent deliberations: consideration of accessibility and costs; the recommendation that the families of the accused be provided for in their absence; acceptance of ‘community approval’ and ‘insanity’ as justifiable reasons for executions; the need for proper instruction on Canadian laws; and the reluctance of the Hudson’s Bay Company to accept police intervention in their relationship with the Inuit. Of particular significance was Deputy Minister Newcombe’s ‘opinion report’ of 1921, which set out the criteria used to evaluate which cases should be brought to trial. This same report was used as reference five years later, in reply to a request from Quebec’s Deputy Attorney General for advice on a similar case. In a covering letter, W. Stewart Edwards, now Deputy Minister of Justice, provides a well-qualified summary of the Department’s current policy.

...with regard to the murder of an Eskimo named David in your province, I may say that the general policy of this department is to endeavour to administer the criminal law among Eskimo as among other classes of the population. It is difficult, however, to lay down a general rule as to the course which should be followed in individual cases, especially where, as in this case, the murdered man was deemed to be violently insane, and was slain under the general authority of the tribe. I do not know that I can give you much assistance in reaching a proper decision as to what should be done, but I enclose for your information a copy of an opinion given by Mr. Newcombe when he was Deputy Minister of Justice, dealing with a similar case coming under the administration of this department.⁵⁰

It appears that while the Department of Justice’s policy was to administer criminal law in the same manner as elsewhere in Canada, it was still prepared to make exceptions. In practice, however, the contingencies did not apply if the victim was a Qallunaaq. On the Belcher Islands, another twenty years would pass

before a magistrate arrived, this time to deal with the deaths of nine men, women and children, caused by religious fanaticism.⁵¹

Pond Inlet, 1920-1923

In the summer of 1921, Staff Sgt. A.H. Joy was sent to Pond Inlet⁵² to investigate the death of free trader Robert Janes. Aside from additional appointments as the officer in charge of the detachment, Justice of the Peace, Postmaster, Coroner and Customs Officer, Commissioner Cortlandt Starnes provided additional instructions:

Your special attention is directed to an alleged murder of a Mr. Janes, by an Eskimo, and you are directed to make a thorough inquiry into this murder and take such steps as are required to bring the guilty parties to justice. Should you find that there is a prima facie case against any person or persons, it will be your duty, if it is clearly established, to take the accused into custody and hold him pending instructions from headquarters.⁵³

Joy arrived at his destination aboard the *Baychimo*, along with Wilfred Parsons and his assistant, Gaston Herodier, who were sent to establish a new Hudson's Bay Company post. Joy lived with the post manager that winter and was dependent upon his cooperation in sharing interpreters, dog sleds and guides. It was not until a year later that the CGS *Arctic* arrived with three more policemen and materials to build the first RCMP detachment on Baffin Island.⁵⁴

When Sgt. Joy set out to locate the body in December 1921, he employed Oorooreungnak as a guide, although he knew him to be one of the parties responsible for Janes's murder.⁵⁵ What does not appear in the archival records is the account of how "Roori," as he was called by the police, had saved Joy's life from an attacking polar bear while on the patrol. Nor how, after locating the body and pursuing further witnesses, Joy had insisted that the body be tied to Roori's sled.⁵⁶ Joy's uncommon success was, in many ways, a consequence of employing a combination of clever psychology and fair treatment. Three Inuit families were asked to accompany Joy back to Pond Inlet so their testimonies could be translated for the inquest.

As Coroner, Joy performed an autopsy to establish the cause of death, then asked three resident fur traders to sit on the jury for the inquest: W.C. Parsons, Gaston Herodier and Wilfred Caron.⁵⁷ Three Inuit witnesses were questioned, each one agreeing that Janes had threatened them, that they were glad he had been killed and that Nookudlah had done so only after deliberation with other men at the camp. Even Janes's sled driver, Ootookito, told how he had heard Janes say "he would shoot the natives and their dogs...if they did not give him fox skins and dogs when he asked for them."⁵⁸ The Coroner's verdict,

nonetheless, stated that Nookudlah, alias Kiwatsoon, "did feloniously and of his malice aforethought kill and murder the said Robert Janes," aided and abetted by Oorooreungnak and Ahteetah.⁵⁹ When Joy asked the fur traders for help in arresting the three men, he was refused outright. Over the next two months, however, the accused arrived at the post, each on his own accord, although likely influenced by Joy's offer of free provisions.⁶⁰

The facts in this case seemed quite straightforward. Janes had quarrelled with all the other traders in the vicinity, and his assistant had died trying to escape. When his ship failed to come with provisions three years in a row, he became increasingly surly and began demanding that the Inuit provide him with furs and food on credit. When Nookudlah's father refused, Janes attacked the elderly shaman with a knife. Later, in a fit of jealousy when his Inuk wife appeared to be attracted to Nookudlah, he threatened to kill him the next time he saw him. Nookudlah apparently kept his distance. In the summer of 1919, Janes refused to accept a passage on the Arctic Gold Exploration Syndicate (AGES) supply ship because the captain demanded half his furs to pay for his fare. Instead, he decided to wait for the next spring and make his way overland by dog sled to Repulse Bay and then on to Chesterfield Inlet. En route, he stopped at a large camp near Cape Crawford and demanded that they give him all their furs, which he claimed were owed to him. When the Inuit refused, he became angry and threatened to kill their dogs and those who still refused to cooperate, a conversation he recorded in his diary just before his death.⁶¹

The Inuit hunters met to discuss the threat. With the approval of the others, Nookudlah agreed to shoot the fur trader, with Oorooreungnak and Ahteetah agreeing to assist by enticing Janes out of his igloo. When he emerged, Nookudlah took a shot, hitting the fur trader in the hip. Janes reportedly remained upright, pleading for his life, until Ahteetah pushed him over. Nookudlah came closer and this time shot him in the head, killing him instantly.

In appreciation for bringing an end to the danger, several hunters presented Nookudlah with fox skins. According to the witnesses, they also treated the body in a manner they believed was appropriate for a Qallunaq, by wrapping it in skins and caching it to prevent destruction by wild animals. Janes's rifle and some of his furs were given to Ahteetah, who claimed they were owed him. The remainder, along with his personal belongings, provisions and notebooks, were gathered together by his former assistant, Ootookito, and delivered to Wilfred Caron at Pond Inlet.⁶² Caron returned south the next summer, but apparently only reported the incident after learning Mrs. Janes was inquiring after her husband.⁶³ Had it not been for the sovereignty-sensitive issues pending with regards to the Arctic Islands and the unprovoked murder of a police officer in the Western Arctic, consideration of costs would likely have been sufficient reason

to 'take no further action.' In this regard, Nookudlah may simply have been an Inuk, in the wrong place, at the wrong time.

On 10 July 1922, Sgt. Joy, sitting as Justice of the Peace, held a preliminary hearing that lasted ten days. This time, eight witnesses were questioned, as were the three accused. In addition, eight "statutory declarations" were received in absentia. Significantly, the only Qallunaaq to give evidence was Wilfred Caron, and he did so on behalf of the defence. Wilfred Caron, who had known Janes since 1909, found him to be a quarrelsome individual, and stated in a signed testimony that he had received written letter from Janes in 1918, in which he threatened to kill Nookudlah.⁶⁴ Many testified they thought Janes had become "mad" or "insane." Even Joy seemed to have doubts about the appropriateness of the judicial process when he reported that "the accused were given the statutory warning, and although the form was complied with and the best explanation possible given them, I was convinced that it was beyond their comprehension." Nevertheless, all three men were held over for formal trial, and 'detained' at the post. There was no jail. The term used was "open arrest," which was explained as "staying in the vicinity."⁶⁵

In July 1923, the CGS *Arctic* left Quebec City with Captain J.E. Bernier in charge of a veteran crew, and J.D. Craig as Commander of the expedition, unexpectedly accompanied by his wife. The aging ship also carried a judicial party comprised of the Hon. Judge [Louis] Rivet of Montreal, lawyers Adrien Falardeau of Quebec City as Crown Prosecutor and Leopold Tellier as Counsel for the Defence, as well as Francois Biron as Clerk.⁶⁶ Within hours of departure, an unfortunate accident caused Wilfred Caron, late of Pond Inlet and a primary witness in the trial, to fall overboard and drown while attempting to free a fore-sail sheet. Desmond O'Connell, Craig's secretary, was also lost in the rescue attempt. Neither body was recovered.⁶⁷ This tragedy had serious ramifications for the accused. Caron knew the Inuit of the area intimately, spoke excellent Inuktitut, had had major disagreements with Janes and, as in the preliminary trial, would likely have given testimony for the defence.

For the Canadian public, the official purpose of the trial was for "the Eskimo to see that Canadian laws must be respected."⁶⁸ A Danish newspaper, however, described a 'not-so-hidden' agenda. Before arriving at Pond Inlet, the CGS *Arctic* visited Godhavn in Greenland, where the ship's officers, government officials and judicial party were wined and dined by Greenland dignitaries. An enterprising news correspondent wired the story of their visit to his newspaper in Copenhagen, with the result that the purpose and intended outcome of the trial appeared in the *Berlingske Tidende* on 19 September 1923, nine days before a carefully coded telegram was sent to Ottawa informing senior officials of the trial

results. A representative of the British government in Copenhagen sent the story to the British Colonial Office:

The "Arctic" with Dr. J. Craig, the head of the mission, a judge, two advocates, a recorder and an interpreter on board, arrived at Godhaven on July 30th where purchases of dogs and provisions were made. This comprehensive legal company was destined to demonstrate both to the white and Eskimo inhabitants how far the British arm of Justice could extend. Their destination was Ponds Inlet where they intended to pass sentence on two Eskimoes who had murdered a white man. The case is stated to have already cost the Canadian Government over a quarter of a million dollars.⁶⁹

The overall purpose of the annual expeditions was also clarified for Danish readers: "neither scientific nor practical investigations form the objective of these visits, but first and foremost a demonstration of Canadian sovereignty over Artic [sic] America is intended."⁷⁰ Craig's comment on the article was equally significant. Writing to O.S. Finnie, Director of the Northwest Territories and Yukon Branch, he remarked, "You will note that the Danes apparently read clearly between the lines and appreciate the fact that Canada is taking an active interest in her northern islands."⁷¹

Unquestionably, the key objective of the trial was to show the world that Canada was executing her full administrative responsibilities in the "effective occupation" of her most northerly islands, with no limits as to the expense. The fact that the news item was relayed by the British representative in Copenhagen to the Secretary of the Colonial Office, who in turn despatched it to Canada's Governor General, suggests that the importance of this trial was acknowledged at the most senior levels of government in Canada and Great Britain.⁷² That there was no reference to a jury trial, only the intent "to pass sentence," failed to raise any written comment. Equally disconcerting was the apparent intention that only two of the three accused were to be found guilty, especially considering that the judicial party provided the information for the story.

The trial formally opened on 25 August 1923, shortly after the CGS *Arctic* anchored at Pond Inlet. For the court proceedings, the judicial party wore long black gowns and stiff-collared white shirts. The RCMP contingent, resplendent in their red uniforms, included Insp. C.E. Wilcox as Officer Commanding; Staff Sgt. A.H. Joy as Deputy Sheriff; Corporal Jakeman as orderly to the Judge; and Constables Fairman and Fielder as official escorts for the prisoners. German-born William Duval, who had lived among the Inuit at Pangnirtung for many years, was brought from the United States to be the official interpreter. Members of the jury comprised the ship's officers and crew, who were dressed in full uniform. With the exception of the wireless operator, all were francophones, a fact that

necessitated translation in English, French and Inuktitut. Along with the accused, the witnesses and as many Inuit as could be accommodated were crowded into the 16' X 25' main room of the RCMP detachment. In his opening remarks, Judge Rivet explained the nature of Canadian laws and the judicial procedures that would ensure a fair trial. Only his final address was given outside, to allow all the Inuit gathered at Pond Inlet to hear his explanation of the Court's decision.⁷³

The trial proceedings were described by Inspector Wilcox as conducted "strictly in accordance with the rules and regulations of the Force and with all the decorum of a supreme court in civilization."⁷⁴ By tradition, the ceremony itself was considered important to impress on the audience the seriousness of the trial.⁷⁵ Other reports suggest this was not necessarily the case at Pond Inlet. On one occasion, for instance, it was reported that the court proceedings were adjourned when a pod of narwhals was sighted from a window, resulting in a mass exodus of Inuit with rifles in hand, and the judicial party seeking refuge under the tables. Similarly, after the trial's opening, Sunday was declared a day of rest. The judicial party slept and read, as expected, but the Inuit gathered for games, dancing, accordion music and general "merry-making."⁷⁶

The trial itself was tedious, owing to the examination and re-examination of witnesses in Inuktitut, and the need to translate their answers into both French and English. For the Inuit, the "many questions in succession [seemed to] tire and confuse them."⁷⁷ According to the story Nookudlah's wife told her children, some of the Inuit gave contradictory answers, apparently causing the judge to become angry. At one point, he tried to explain that in the south they would all be found guilty. This was translated to mean they were all going to be killed, at which point Captain Bernier allegedly declared that "If you are going to kill them, I'll leave and I'll leave without you," whereupon he retired to his ship until it was all over. Problems in communication, it appeared, arose from the hurried simultaneous translation into two other languages.⁷⁸

In terms of the jury selection and procedure, there were a number of discrepancies. Aside from the francophones' dominance and their unfamiliarity with trading relationships or Inuit customs, there was no place to "sequester" the jury. Instead, they were simply charged not to discuss the trial with their friends. According to one member, however, the fact that the jury "was out for 25 minutes" did not seem unusual since "they had already debated the matter for an hour the night before," apparently before the lawyers' summations the next day.⁷⁹ Insp. Wilcox summarized the conclusions:

The counsel for the defence in his plea for the accused pointed out the weakness of the evidence against Ahteetah, and urged that he be discharged. He pleaded that the life of the Eskimos, their ignorance of

the laws of civilization, and the provocation given them by Janes be taken into consideration by the jury in arriving at their verdict.

The counsel for the Crown pressed for a conviction of the three accused, and stated that in civilization he would ask for a verdict of murder, but taking into consideration the ignorance of the prisoners, he only asked for a verdict of manslaughter. He informed the jury they could, if they desired, recommend the accused to the clemency of the court.⁸⁰

The jury did recommend mercy for Nookudlah, "because of extenuating circumstances,"⁸¹ but Judge Rivet seems to have turned a blind eye when he passed sentence. As noted earlier, Nookudlah was found guilty of manslaughter and sentenced to ten years in Stony Mountain Penitentiary. Ahteetah was acquitted, but Oorooreungnak was "sentenced to two years imprisonment with hard labour in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police guardroom at Pond Inlet" for aiding and abetting.⁸² Of course there was no guardroom; nor was Oorooreungnak imprisoned or subjected to hard labour. Both Ahteetah and Oorooreungnak worked as guides and sled drivers for the police.

Official reports claimed the event left a lasting impression on the Inuit. Granted there were no more incidents of violence, but the impression may not have been as anticipated. As described years later by the son of Ahteetah, one of the accused:

The people sat in rows and argued. All the men in the front row -- and there were a lot -- were wearing red tunics. There were three men on trial, including my father. One was taken away by ship, but the other two, who were equally involved, were left behind.⁸³

Similarly, after the announcement of the verdict, it was reported that the Inuit "joined in three generous cheers for the judge."⁸⁴ Martha Akumalik, who attended the trial as an eleven-year-old child, had a different interpretation. Based on her memory of the cheering, she claimed "there was a lot of noise, because they were saved from being killed."⁸⁵

In his closing remarks, the judge stated that Nookudlah's punishment would be more beneficial than a death sentence, because he would be humiliated in front of his admirers when led directly to the ship, "through a gazing crowd of his own people, without being given a chance to communicate with any of them."⁸⁶ Little did he suspect the futility of his statement. As reported by the sole anglophone juror, both Nookudlah's wife and father visited him aboard the ship and brought gifts for those in charge. His wife appeared upset and crying, but "Nookudlah did not seem to mind in the least. He spoke a little English and asked for water, which Mr. Earl [the juror] procured."⁸⁷

In fact, Nookudlah had a rather extraordinary send-off. At Sgt. Joy's insistence, the CGS *Arctic* transported nine Inuit families and all their worldly belongings to their camps at Canada Point and Arctic Bay, before finally proceeding south to Pangnirtung.⁸⁸ At one point, according to Commander Craig, the ship was carrying "roughly 25 whites, 60 Eskimos, and 80 dogs." In addition to the special treatment accorded the prisoner aboard the ship, the commander expressed concern that instructions on his care be sent to the penitentiary, "particularly as to the temperature of his cell, his clothing, and food, and tobacco."⁸⁹

Far from being humiliated, Nookudlah seems to have enjoyed the voyage south. A reporter was on hand for his arrival at Quebec and described him as "a picturesque individual indeed" as he debarked from the ship:

The prisoner did not seem the least bit perturbed at the thought of having to spend the next ten years at Stony Mountain Penitentiary in Manitoba; in fact, he grinned quite delightedly when the moving picture man proceeded to take a "close-up." He was dressed in a blue cloth suit with brass buttons, a green woollen cap, a khaki shirt and beaver boots.⁹⁰

When asked whether he understood "the gravity of his position," he had replied "Yes, I know where I am going: to the white man's prison with strong wooden bars; and I am going there on a sleigh without dogs."

Nookudlah, unfortunately, did not serve out his term, for within a year he had contracted tuberculosis. O.S. Finnie, as Director of the Northwest Territories and Yukon Branch, requested a medical certificate declaring him free of disease, so he might return home on the CGS *Arctic*. Even then, he slept on the deck in a whale boat to avoid possible spread of the disease. By the time he arrived at Pond Inlet, he was running a high fever and coughing up blood.⁹¹ If the trial and punishment were not sufficient deterrence, the return of Nookudlah as a frail ghost of his former self would leave a lasting impression that few would forget.⁹² Provided with 'destitute rations' by the RCMP, Nookudlah left with his wife for a nearby camp on Emerson Island (Qimivvik). He gradually weakened, fell into a coma, and died on 5 December 1925.⁹³

As a final observation of the disparity between the 'official word' and the 'real world,' one need only re-examine Judge Rivet's final message to the Inuit at Pond Inlet, as re-told by a reporter for the *Quebec Telegraph*:

Magistrate Rivet, in passing judgment, impressed upon the natives who were sitting around, the gravity of the offence and the manner in which it is punished in the white man's country.... He then proceeded to tell the natives, through the interpreter, the sort of punishment inflicted on a murderer in civilized parts of the world, and stressed the

point that if a white man were to kill an Eskimo, the killer would certainly die on the scaffold.⁹⁴ (underlining mine)

The phrase “in civilized parts of the world” may have special meaning. Only weeks before the Janes murder trial, it was brought to the RCMP Commissioner’s attention that a book by the American explorer Donald MacMillan had described a homicide taking place in 1914 on Axel Heiberg Island. In this case, one of his crew had shot and killed Peeawahto, the Greenlandic guide who had accompanied the famous Robert Peary on his polar expeditions. The only provocation was that the Inuk had refused to obey orders. After consulting Sir Joseph Pope, then Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, and on the advice of his Minister, Commissioner Starnes reported that no action would be taken because the victim was a Danish subject, the murderer was now an officer in the United States Navy and it happened “a long time ago.”⁹⁵ One wonders if the decision would have been different if the victim had not been an Inuk, but a Qallunaaq, or if the location had not been in the Arctic, but in “a civilized part of the world.”

Religious Fanaticism, Religious Insanity and Other Forms of ‘Madness’

Significantly, there were no further murders of Qallunaaq on Baffin Island in the next two decades, but there were many reports of violence among the Inuit. Most were related to alleged ‘insanity,’ often followed by Inuit execution of the insane to protect others in the community. As noted earlier, a surprising number were attributed to the introduction of Christianity, and described as ‘religious insanity,’ or in cases where the unconventional behaviour affected the entire community, ‘religious fanaticism.’ One such incident occurred while Sgt. Joy was conducting his preliminary investigations into the death of Robert Janes.

The first report of several murders having occurred at Kevetuk on Home Bay came from Captain Henry Toke Munn, director of a trading company, the Arctic Gold Exploration Syndicate (AGES).⁹⁶ More accurate reports followed as Inuit from the region south of Pond Inlet arrived at the trading post.⁹⁷ As the story unfolded, it seemed that the manager of the Sabellum Trading Post, an Inuk named Neahkuteuk (or Niaqutsiaq), believing he was “filled with the spirit of God,” had roused the Inuit to a point of religious frenzy. While in this state of alleged insanity, he had ordered the execution of two Inuuk, to which his hysterical followers willingly complied. Finally, a blood relative killed Neahkuteuk just as he was about to bludgeon a kneeling woman with a hammer.⁹⁸

Unwilling to send his men to investigate while “guarding the prisoners” at Pond Inlet, Sgt. Joy suggested the establishment of a police detachment at Pangnirtung which could be used as a base for a patrol to Home Bay.⁹⁹ A more

complete report was sent south by the CGS *Arctic* in 1923, along with four RCMP officers to establish a detachment at Pangnirtung. Commander J.D. Craig added to Joy's covering letter on the report the words "justifiable homicide," followed by his initials.¹⁰⁰ When informed of the case by Commissioner Starnes, O.S. Finnie added his own views.

Referring to your letter of the 12th instant enclosing a report of Staff Sergeant Joy regarding the murder of three Eskimos at Home Bay, Baffin Island, I presume that as this is purely a case of insanity, that no further action will be taken in the matter. The Eskimo who killed the insane man did so in the defence of the other members of the tribe, and I should think his action is to be commended rather than anything else.¹⁰¹

Meanwhile, Corporal McInnes and Constable MacGregor conducted a thorough investigation at Kevetuk, spending over a month with the families to assess the stability of the community. After a year at Pond Inlet, MacGregor had learned sufficient Inuktitut to eliminate the need for an interpreter to record the long, detailed testimonies of the witnesses. McInnes, meanwhile, attempted to analyze how aspects of shamanism had interacted with misunderstood Christian beliefs to end in religious frenzy and death. He suggested that the missionary practice of providing syllabic Bibles without adequate instruction on their interpretation was partially responsible for the fanaticism and recommended that the Inuit should not be prosecuted for the tragic deaths. Instead, he advised that the police should make more frequent patrols to monitor Inuit activities.¹⁰² The advice was heeded by others, with the result that prevention became a conscious objective for police posted on Baffin Island.¹⁰³

Other forms of 'religious insanity' affected individuals rather than the entire community, but still involved belief in god-like powers or acts of possession as had occurred at Kevetuk. Such cases seemed particularly prevalent in areas of Ungava and Baffin Island where lay preachers or catechists had been deployed to spread the faith through distribution of syllabic Bibles.¹⁰⁴ In the fall of 1925, as an example, a young Inuk was reported to have heard voices from the clouds telling him to kill everyone in the camp. After he had shot his mother, father and another woman, those who had escaped the slaughter decided he must be destroyed to prevent further killings. Eventually, they overpowered him and drowned him in a water hole. Using the same rationale employed by Insp. Phillips in the Belcher Islands case, Sgt. J.E.F. Wight explained that "no prosecution was instituted, partly because of the great difficulty in arranging transport" and the fact that these Inuit were already suffering severe hardship. Wight then suggested these "communal killings" were nearing an end as the Inuit received more instruction on Canadian "law and order."¹⁰⁵ Further incidents

occurred, causing Corporal Petty to reiterate in 1928 how some Inuit seemed particularly susceptible to religious hysteria, but that regular visits from the police tended to break “the unhealthy thoughts” and at the same time encourage trust and respect for authority.¹⁰⁶ There was no pressure to conduct major investigations or bring cases to trial, as in the Western Arctic.

On Baffin Island, the term ‘insanity’ was frequently used to describe a personality change in an individual who suddenly became morose or abusive. Often considered “as having gone crazy,” an Inuk sometimes killed, then committed suicide.¹⁰⁷ Such cases were particularly evident in domestic squabbles, but unlike the earlier investigations on the Belcher Islands, they were no longer treated as criminal acts. Instead, the police employed mediation or, as a last resort, brought the affected individual to the detachment to monitor his or her behaviour.¹⁰⁸ More serious cases of schizophrenia or [intellectual disability] required protection from those who feared their behaviour. These Inuit were also brought to the detachment to await diagnosis by the medical officer on the annual supply ship, then, if necessary, to be transported south for treatment.¹⁰⁹ On one occasion, an Inuk reportedly experienced a ‘miraculous’ recovery upon learning of the ship’s imminent arrival.¹¹⁰

Similar incidents in Ungava proved more difficult to resolve. Since 1912, the Quebec government had relied upon the Hudson’s Bay Company to maintain law and order by appointing the HBCo district manager as Justice of the Peace. Occasionally, reports of violence would filter through to the RCMP at Port Burwell. In 1926, as an example, Corporal J. Nichols learned of two separate cases of violence in the Cape Wolstenholme district between 1924 and 1925. The first incident involved an Inuk shooting another who was supposedly ‘crazy’; the second, a youth having shot his mother. Nichols offered to make the 2000-mile patrol necessary to investigate the cases.¹¹¹ The Deputy Minister of Justice, however, advised Commissioner Starnes that “an expensive land patrol” was unnecessary considering that one of the deaths had been approved by the community and had already been brought to the attention of the Quebec government.¹¹² Initially, the Deputy Attorney General had asked the HBC District Manager, in his role as Justice of the Peace, to investigate. Ralph Parsons reported the usual story, i.e., that an Inuk named David had suffered periods of insanity and in the winter of 1925 had made repeated threats to kill members of the community. After a council meeting, it was decided that two men would assume the responsibility of shooting David, one of them being David’s own brother.¹¹³

In these circumstances, Deputy Attorney General Charles Lanctôt wrote to Edwards, as Canada’s Deputy Minister of Justice, claiming that “this is the first case of this nature that has come to our attention and we will be very much

obliged to you if you will let us know how would your Department meet the present circumstances.”¹¹⁴ Edwards’s reply suggests that the Department of Justice still did not have a clear policy on the question of Inuit murders, but he added his own views to Newcombe’s earlier version:

I may say that the general policy of this department is to endeavour to administer the criminal law among the Eskimo as among other classes of the population. It is difficult, however, to lay down a general rule as to the course which should be followed in individual cases, especially where, as in this case, the murdered man was deemed to be violently insane, and was slain under the general authority of the tribe. I do not know that I can give you much assistance in reaching a proper decision as to what should be done, but I enclose for your information a copy of an opinion given by Mr. Newcombe when he was Deputy Minister of Justice.¹¹⁵

In point of fact, execution of the allegedly insane had been actively condoned by the Ungava fur traders for many years, and in one case they actually advised an Inuk from Cape Dufferin “to put the insane man away,” because he was afraid to leave his family alone to go out and hunt. The Inuit complied, and five hunters shot at him as he was running to a water hole.¹¹⁶ This would appear to be an arctic adaptation of frontier justice.

The event that triggered an end to the supernumerary powers assumed by the Hudson’s Bay Company began in February 1926, when Sgt. Wight set out from Pangnirtung to investigate a rumour of an Inuk murder in the vicinity of Lake Harbour. Upon arriving at the HBCo post at Amadjuak, he was informed by the manager that “the Company were the absolute rulers of the Eskimo...and that it was hardly necessary for the Police to make such a long trip.” Probing further, Wight discovered that in the winter of 1919-1920, Davidee, a former Inuit lay preacher, had killed five people and injured another before disappearing. Several months later, an arctic-style posse astride seven sleds with an army of dogs, and the Lake Harbour post manager and his assistant leading the way, had tracked down the Inuk and summarily shot him dead. Wight next questioned the Lake Harbour manager, who claimed no knowledge of the incident but was unable to produce the Company books for that year because they had been removed on the orders of the district manager.¹¹⁷

Aware that the Inuit had been warned not to discuss the episode with the police, Wight tracked down the interpreter who had served at the post during the period in question. A signed statement by John Hayward provided explicit details of the incident and also explained the absence of a corpse. Apparently, the men had pushed the body through a crack in the sea ice to be disposed of by “seal lice.” When police officers visited the post the next summer, Mr. Hayward had

been assured by the post manager that the incident had already been reported to the authorities and that no further action was necessary.¹¹⁸

The focus of Wight's concern in his report to Commissioner Starnes was directed towards the actions of the HBCo traders and their attempted cover-up. Starnes immediately contacted Edwards, now Deputy Minister of Justice, who then wrote Governor C.V. Sale of the Hudson's Bay Company. Edwards was polite but firm, charging that, "from reports received here, certain officials of the Hudson's Bay Company on Southern Baffin Island have taken into their own hands the administration of criminal justice in that part of Canada."¹¹⁹ Sale's first response was to promise an immediate investigation, as it appeared to demand "very serious discipline."¹²⁰ After discussion with his district manager, however, Sale reported back that he did not think there was any wrong-doing. The manager in question, the same Ralph Parsons referred to earlier, admitted knowledge of the incident, but claimed that "the Esquimaux at the post asked for steps to be taken for their protection," and that it was natural that his post manager would come forward to help kill the "insane Eskimo." Since the Inuk was a former lay preacher, Parsons said he had also consulted Rev. A.L. Fleming at the Lake Harbour mission and it was "decided that nothing further need be done."¹²¹ Sale made no mention about Parsons having removed the Company's log books, or the warning to everyone not to discuss the matter with the police, or the fact that Rev. Fleming was only notified many months after the event.

S.J. Stewart, the post manager at the time of the slaying, had prepared his own statement. By his account, ten men, comprising two Qallunaat and eight Inuit, had spread out along a ridge of snow ice and, "at a given signal, all fired together into the back of the snowhouse" where Davidee was apparently asleep. He then related how "the second volley...killed him at once" when he appeared at a hole made in the igloo. The victim had no opportunity to surrender or defend himself, somewhat akin to an execution by a firing squad. Stewart justified his actions by declaring that, "there being no Police in Baffin Land at the time and having no means of communication with the outside world, Mr. Learmouth and I considered it our duty to protect the people and ourselves from this homicidal maniac." He also went to great lengths to blame Davidee's 'insanity' on the lack of proper instruction in Christianity. "Davie," he argued, "was a very religious Eskimo, who, in common with many of his fellows, have gone "queer" when thinking too much on religious subjects."¹²² Since no copy of this statement appears in government files, it may well have been prepared for use in the event of further investigations or plans for a trial. By Stewart's description, it would be impossible to blame any individual for Davidee's death. Noting the precedent established in the Belcher Islands case, it would also be inhumane to imprison eight Inuit hunters without providing for their families.

While the Justice Department appeared satisfied with Governor Sale's explanations, the RCMP Commissioner took measures to ensure that law enforcement remained in the hands of the police. His first step was to build another detachment, this time at Lake Harbour, to facilitate patrols throughout southern Baffin and prevent further incidents of frontier-style justice. With the new detachment, the RCMP now had reasonable access to all the heavily populated areas of Baffin Island. Given the decline of Inuit violence after 1927, the strategy appeared to be successful. The second measure was to request approval to conduct a full investigation into reports of HBC exploitation of the Inuit. Permission, it appears, was denied by the Department of Justice.

In the Ungava region, where police patrols were few and limited, the Hudson's Bay Company continued to exert full authority throughout the twenties. Then, in 1931, the tables were turned when the Hudson's Bay Company proved incapable of halting the activities of a syncretic religious movement at Leaf River. The police were called in, not officially, but by word of mouth through the trading network, and on the pretext that the group leaders were threatening to stone barren women. Following a thorough investigation, Corporal McInnes found no evidence of such threats and no incidents of murder or violence, but it was obvious that the group's growing disrespect and peculiar rituals had so alarmed the traders that some reportedly feared for their lives. Instead of taking the leaders back to the Port Burwell detachment, as some suggested, McInnes resolved the issue with the threat of imprisonment unless they stopped their "silly actions." They complied, reluctantly.¹²³ Ten years later, however, there was no one to intervene in the Belcher Islands to stem the fanatical religious behaviour that took the lives of six adults and three children.

Comparisons and Conclusions

All regions of the Arctic experienced criminal acts of violence following World War One, but there were a disproportionately greater number in the Central Arctic relative to the population, more Qallunaat slain and more spontaneous killings without community consent. The majority in the Eastern Arctic seemed to be insanity related and approved by consensus, although there were random instances of an Inuk killing his father, or a husband killing his wife, often followed by suicide. Many of these only received cursory mention, although if brought to the attention of southern officials, some form of investigation and report seemed to follow. For the most part, differences by region can be explained by the timing and nature of previous contact relations with whalers, traders and missionaries. The situation in Ungava, however, was unique. Plagued by jurisdictional squabbling, the Hudson's Bay Company traders had assumed the

sole power of authority in the region and, in their own self-interest, had sanctioned the right to take a life, if threatened.

When measured against the Central Arctic, the need to bring homicide cases to trial in the East seemed less urgent and was frequently dismissed because of cost. The Western Arctic also seemed to be attracting an increasing number of adventurers and trappers seeking personal fortunes, primarily because of easy access down the Mackenzie River. For the same reason, reports of homicides were more difficult to ignore, and the increasing non-native population required more protection. Court trials may also have been used more frequently in the West because of the precedent established at the outset, the different nature of the crimes and, even more likely, the greater number of Qallunaat victims.

When Deputy Minister Newcombe gave his opinion on the 1919 Belcher Islands case, he seemed to condone the Inuit custom of terminating life if it was done by community approval and if the individual posed a serious threat to the lives of others. It is noteworthy, however, that he first referred to 'difficulty and expense' as serious considerations affecting decisions on the proper course of action. Newcombe also suggested that court trials may not be a favoured alternative to "some wise and forceful admonition," but gave fair warning that in the case "of deliberate killings for gain or revenge or the like, perhaps the prosecution could not well be avoided, notwithstanding the attendant difficulties and inconvenience." His concluding comments affirmed that leniency and compassion were not to be taken for granted.

...the authorities were disposed to a benevolent or compassionate view, having regard to the circumstances and to the ignorant, uninformed and simple condition of the people, and giving them a solemn and emphatic warning that, if another life were taken in circumstances which did not according to the law admit of the most ample or apparent justification, or if there should be any further disturbance of the peace or well founded complaints of a serious wrong doing, a judicial tribunal would be sent into the country with the necessary officers of the law to inquire, adjudge and execute sentence upon the offenders.¹²⁴

The experience in the East suggests that a permanent police presence, sensitive to Inuit needs and traditions, proved a more effective means of reducing the number of violent crimes among the Inuit than ceremonial court trials. In the absence of a police presence and regular patrols, violence persisted.

Notwithstanding, the Janes murder trial stands out against all others at the time as exorbitantly costly and lacking compassionate understanding. Newcombe's criteria for leniency -- community consent and posing a serious menace -- seem applicable here, had the victim been an Inuk. Unfortunately, the

unprovoked murder of an RCMP constable at Tree River in 1921 provided strong incentive for a harsh sentence as a means of deterrence. Even then, the trial proceedings and Nookudlah's sentence seem a less compelling deterrent than the return of a formerly handsome and proud Inuk as a sick and dying man.

From an outsider's standpoint, but one who had access to first-hand information when writing his history of the Mounted Police, Morris Longstreth argued that the trial was a form of conquest:

The long-drawn tale makes it clear that Nookudlah had killed a white man. It is true, of course, that this white man invaded his land, brought strange customs, ignored the native cardinal principle of good nature, provoked natives, terrified them with threats to kill them and their dogs. But a white man had been killed and must be avenged. It is the natives' misfortune if they had not heard of the custom called the law. Nookudlah must be punished. Otherwise white traders might not feel safe to trade jack knives for foxes. The immoral ethic of conquest has been pleased to clothe itself in legal terms. It is a sign that as brigands, we at least grow politer.¹²⁵

There may well be ample justification for this argument, but the evidence shown here suggests that the trial at Pond Inlet in 1923 was, first and foremost, a conscious and deliberate act of 'Showing the Flag.' The fact that Nookudlah was also defending his own people against an outside threat appeared inconsequential.

Notes

¹ Canada, Sessional Paper No. 21, *Report of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for the year ending September 30, 1922* (Ottawa: King's Printer), 22. Hereafter, the reference will read *RCMP Annual Report* (with date).

² *RCMP Annual Report for 1923* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1924), 32-34.

³ National Archives of Canada (NAC), RG 85, vol. 601, file 2502, "The C.G.S. "Arctic" Expedition of 1922" by J.D. Craig, 21.

⁴ *RCMP Annual Report for 1925* (Ottawa: King's Printer), 40.

⁵ Graham Price, *Remote Justice: The Stipendiary Magistrate's Court of the Northwest Territories (1905-1955)*, LL.M. Thesis (University of Manitoba, 1986), 236-237. I am particularly indebted to Mr. Price for sending the relevant chapter of his thesis. For the purposes of this study, the Arctic is divided according to the administrative divisions of the RCMP from 1925 and 1933. The Eastern Arctic (which was administered from headquarters in Ottawa) included areas served by detachments on Baffin, Devon and Ellesmere Islands, and at Port Burwell. The Belcher Islands were administered directly from Ottawa. The Hudson Bay sub-district included the posts on the western shores of Hudson Bay (and later Baker Lake). The Western

Arctic sub-district included the Arctic Coast from Aklavik to Repulse Bay and the adjacent islands, and until 1933 was administered from Edmonton. See *RCMP Annual Reports* from 1925 through to 1933.

⁶ Interviews with Inuit Elders were funded by a three-year Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) grant, as part of a comprehensive study of Inuit and RCMP contact relationships in the Eastern Arctic from 1920 to 1939.

⁷ W. Gillies Ross, "Whaling, Inuit, and the Arctic Islands," in Kenneth S. Coates and William R. Morrison, eds., *Interpreting Canada's North: Selected Readings* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1989), 238; and Dorothy Eber Harley, *When the Whalers Were Up North: Inuit Memories from the Eastern Arctic* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989).

⁸ Ross, 241-243; also Philip Goldring, "Inuit Economic Responses to Euro-American Contacts: Southeast Baffin Island, 1824-1940," in Coates and Morrison (1989), 254-255.

⁹ Alfred Tremblay, *The Cruise of the Minnie Maud: Arctic Seas and Hudson Bay, 1910-11 and 1912-13* (Quebec City: The Arctic Exchange and Publishing Limited, 1921), 324, i-x; Goldring, 264-266. The Hudson's Bay Company had posts located on the eastern shores of Hudson Bay since the 1820s, and in Ungava since 1830, but the first post on Baffin Island was at Lake Harbour in 1911. Further expansion was delayed until after the Great War.

¹⁰ Marc Stevenson, *Inuit, Whalers and Cultural Persistence: Structure in Cumberland Sound and Central Inuit Social Organization* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997), 117-120.

¹¹ Susan Cowan, ed., *We Don't Live in Snow Houses Now: Reflections of Arctic Bay* (Ottawa: Canadian Arctic Producers, 1976), 25. Ahlooloo recalls how his father admonished his nephew for having killed the white trader, Robert Janes, saying "You should not have killed a *qallunaaq*. Now you are going to see another one."

¹² NAC, RG 18, vol. 3284, file 1920 HQ-1034-C-1, report from Port Harrison, 12 October 1921; RG 18, vol. 3313, file 1925 HQ-118-C2, Governor C. Sale of the Hudson's Bay Company to W.S. Edwards, Deputy Minister of Justice, 12 October 1926. See also Hudson's Bay Archives, signed statement by Post Manager S.J. Stewart, dated 13 May 1927, at Port Harrison.

¹³ John Bockstoce, *Whales, Ice, & Men: The History of Whaling in the Western Arctic* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986), 274-279; Diamond Jenness, *Eskimo Administration II: Canada* (Montreal: Arctic Institute of North America, 1964), 14.

¹⁴ Sidney Harring, "The rich men of the country: Canadian law in the land of the Copper Inuit, 1914-1930," *Ottawa Law Review* (1989): 7-21. A new detachment was built in 1919, at Tree River on Coronation Gulf, to enforce Canadian laws in the region and create a stable environment for traders and government activities.

¹⁵ W.C. Rasing, *'Too Many People' -- Order and Nonconformity in Iglulingmuit Social Process* (Nimegen, Netherlands: Recht and Samenleving, 1994), 116-132;

and Allan L. Patenaude, "Whose Law? Whose Justice? Two Conflicting Systems of Law and Justice in Canada's Northwest Territories" (Vancouver: Northern Justice Society at Simon Fraser University, 1989), 36-42.

¹⁶ Kaj Birket-Smith, *The Eskimos* (London: Methuen, 1936), 164.

¹⁷ Hugh Brody, *Living Arctic: Hunters of the Canadian North* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1987), 126-127.

¹⁸ Asen Balicki, *The Netsilik Eskimo* (New York: Garden City, 1970), 179-180.

¹⁹ Patenaude, 42.

²⁰ William R. Morrison, *Showing the Flag: The Mounted Police and Canadian Sovereignty in the North, 1894-1925* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1985), 148.

²¹ Franz Boas believed that 'blood feuds' were more prevalent in Canada's Eastern and Central Arctic. A more recent study of the Cumberland Sound area by Marc Stevenson, however, suggests that while evident during the early years of whaling in the Cumberland Sound, these feuds declined with greater exposure to the Qallunaat. Stevenson, *Inuit, Whalers and Cultural Persistence*, 54-58; Franz Boas, *The Central Eskimo* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), 174.

²² R.G. Moyles, *British Law and Arctic Men: The Celebrated 1917 Murder Trials of Sinnisiak and Uluksuk, First Inuit Tried Under White Man's Law* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1979).

²³ Harwood Steele, *Policing the Arctic: Story of the Conquest of the Arctic by the Royal Canadian (Formerly North-West) Mounted Police* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1936), 203, 229-231; also William R. Morrison, "Canadian Sovereignty and the Inuit of the Central Arctic," *Études/Inuit/Studies*, 10:1 (1986): 251-252.

²⁴ *RCMP Annual Report* (1924), 54; also letter from HBCo Post Manager, S.J. Stewart, to District Manager Ralph Parsons, 1 August 1927, Hudson's Bay Company Archives. Copy on file with the local history project conducted by Elizabeth McIsaac at Lake Harbour in the summer of 1993.

²⁵ Shelagh D. Grant, "Religious Fanaticism at Leaf River, Ungava -- 1931," *Études/Inuit/Studies*, 12:2 (1997). The first Roman Catholic mission in the Eastern Arctic was established at Pond Inlet in 1927 and the second in 1936, at Wakeham Bay in northern Quebec.

²⁶ Richard Diubaldo, *The Government of Canada and the Inuit, 1900-1967* (Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs, 1985), 14.

²⁷ NAC, RG 85, vol. 583, file 571, pts 1 and 2, see related reports and correspondence. For proposals, see pt 3: Confidential Memorandum, 11 February 1922; also J.D. Craig to Harkin, 2 February 1922.

²⁸ RG 85, vol. 602, file 2502, pts 1 and 2. See reports on the Arctic Expeditions and coded messages for 1922 and 1923, by J.D. Craig, commander of the expeditions, in files 2502, pt 1 and 2502, pt 2 respectively. See also file 2502, pt 2, Deputy Minister of the Interior, W.W. Cory, to Prime Minister Mackenzie King, 5 July 1923.

²⁹ Morrison (1986), 248.

³⁰ RG 18, vol. 3313, file 1925-Q-1180-C-2, Report by Sgt. J.E.F. Wight, 5 July 1926, to Officer Commanding, RCMP Headquarters, Ottawa. Upon Sgt. Wight's arrival on patrol from Pangnirtung, the term "supreme rulers" was used by the HBCo manager at Amadjuak to describe the power of the Company and why the police were not needed in southern Baffin Island. The same tendency was noted earlier. See William R. Morrison, *Showing the Flag: Canadian Sovereignty and the Mounted Police, 1884-1925* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1985), 144.

³¹ RG 18, vol. 3276, file 1918-HQ-1180-C-1, RNWMP Commissioner A.B. Perry to Charles Lanctot, Deputy Attorney General of Quebec, 2 April 1919.

³² *RCMP Annual Report* (1931), 81.

³³ Walter Vanast, "'Hastening the Day of Extinction': Canada, Québec, and the Medical Care of Ungava's Inuit, 1867-1967," *Études/Inuit/Studies*, 15:2 (1991): 59-60 and 75.

³⁴ RG 18, vol. 3313, file 1925-HQ-1180-C-2, Charles Lanctot, Deputy Attorney General of Quebec, to W. Stuart Edwards, Deputy Minister of Justice, 4 January 1926, with report attached from Ralph Parsons, area manager of the Hudson's Bay Company and Justice of the Peace for Quebec, dated 30 November 1925, concerning his investigation into the shooting death of an Inuk who was said to be "violently insane" and "a menace" to others. The report recommended no further action be taken and described how the author had instructed the Inuit concerning Canadian laws. Essentially, it was a scaled-down version of a police "Crime Report."

³⁵ *Ibid.*, Deputy Minister of Justice, W.S. Edwards, to Charles Lanctot, now Quebec Attorney General, 25 January 1926.

³⁶ RG 18, vol. 3276, file 1918-HQ-681-G-1, W.C. Rackin to J. Thomson, Fur Trade Commissioner, 18 April 1919.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, Thomson, to A.A. McLean, RNWMP Controller, 19 May 1919; Acting RNWMP Controller L. du Plessis to Thomson, 31 May 1919.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, Lanctot to Newcombe, 11 July 1919, as explained in letter from RCMP Comptroller A.A. McLean to Commissioner A.B. Perry, 25 July 1919.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, Perry to McLean, 19 September 1919.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, "Crime report re Alleged Murder of Ketaushuk," 29 September 1920.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Coroner's report, 23 September 1920, with Sgt. H.A. Joy, J.W. Phillips, Samuel Stewart Sainsbury, Bruce MacKendrick and David Louttit signing as witnesses.

⁴² RG 18, vol. 3277, file 1919-HQ-681-G-2, "Crime report re Alleged Murder of Kookyauk," 1 October 1920.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 23 September 1920, Coroner's report on the murder of Kookyauk.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Report by Insp. Phillips, dated 29 October 1920.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Two letters from Rev. Walton to the RCMP Commissioner, one dated 15 April 1921 and the other undated.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, E.L. Newcombe to RCMP Comm. Perry, 29 October 1920.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Memo by Phillips, 8 June 1921.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, E.L. Newcombe to Commissioner Perry, 9 June 1921.

⁴⁹ *RCMP Annual Report* (1921), 34.

⁵⁰ RG 18, vol. 3313, file 1925-HQ-1180-C2, Edwards to Lanctot, 15 January 1926, with attached report by Newcombe, 2 June 1921.

⁵¹ Alan Sullivan, "When God Came to the Belchers," *Queen's Quarterly*, 51:2 (1944).

⁵² The original name for this community was "Pond's Inlet," changing over time to Pond Inlet, and is now Mittimatalik. To avoid confusion, I have used the spelling commonly used in most official reports during the 1920s and 1930s.

⁵³ *RCMP Annual Report* (1921), 21.

⁵⁴ Unless noted otherwise, the information for this section is found in RG 18, volumes 3280, 3281 and part of volume 3293. RG 85, vol. 609, file 2687 also provides a concentrated collection of documents related to the inquest and trial. These records have only recently been opened to researchers and are invaluable in correcting numerous errors in secondary sources based largely on other newspaper accounts, on second-hand information and/or on government reports written for public consumption.

⁵⁵ RG 18, vol. 3668, file 567-69 (vol. 1), Patrol from Pond Inlet to Cape Crawford and Arctic Bay, 25 January 1922.

⁵⁶ Taped interview (1977) by former RCMP Corporal Finley McInnes, titled "Pre-Janes Trial." McInnes joined Sgt. Joy at Pond Inlet in the summer of 1922. He and Constable William MacGregor were given the task of rounding up all the witnesses from Arctic Bay and Igloodik, for the jury trial in 1923.

⁵⁷ Alex Stevenson, "The Robert Janes Murder Trial at Pond Inlet," *The Beaver* (Autumn 1973): 20.

⁵⁸ RG 85, vol. 609, file 2687, Crime report by Sgt. Joy, 13 February 1922.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Coroner's verdict, 11 February 1922.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Crime Report, 13 February 1922; also *RCMP Annual Report* (1922).

⁶¹ John S. Matthiasson, *Living on the Land: Change Among the Inuit of Baffin Island* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1992), 45-46. With the exception of the reference to Janes's diary, which was taken from Matthiasson's book, this account is a synopsis from the archival reports, witnesses' testimonies, crime reports and the 1922 *RCMP Annual Report*, all listed above. Other published accounts with direct input from senior RCMP officers appear in T. Morris Longstreth, *The Silent Force: Scenes from the Life of the Mounted Police of Canada* (New York: The Century Co., 1927); and Steele.

⁶² Caron was Captain Bernier's nephew and came to Pond Inlet to assist his uncle with a private trading venture in 1910. When Bernier sold his land and buildings to

the Arctic Gold Exploration Syndicate (AGES) in 1919, Caron stayed over that winter to represent the new owner and returned again for the winter in 1921-1922. See Yolande Dorion-Robitaille, *Captain J.E. Bernier's Contribution to Canadian Sovereignty in the Arctic* (Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs, 1978), 92-105.

⁶³ Matthiasson, 45-46.

⁶⁴ RG 18, vol. 3281, file 1920-HQ-681-G4, Supp.B. See signed statement by Wilfred Caron, who claimed he had the aforementioned letter in his personal belongings at his home in Quebec.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *RCMP Annual Report for the year ending September 30, 1923*, 33.

⁶⁷ RG 85, vol. 2138, file "CGS Arctic Logbook, 9 July -- 4 October 1923"; also RG 85, vol. 601, file 2502, pt 2, Draft report of the 1923 expedition by J.D. Craig.

⁶⁸ RG 85, vol. 601, file 2502, pt 1, Report on the 1922 Arctic Expedition by J.D. Craig, page 21.

⁶⁹ RG 85, vol. 602, file 2502, pt 2. See despatch no. 266; also copies of the coded telegrams (28 September 1923) and decoded message (29 September) in this same file.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* See despatch.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, Craig to Finnie, 3 November 1923.

⁷² *Ibid.* See attached correspondence from Granville to Marquis Lord of Curzon of Kedleston, 19 September 1923, and forwarding note by Devonshire to Lord Byng.

⁷³ Reported in *The Toronto Star Weekly* (3 November 1923): 19. Under the headline, "Now Baffin's Land Has An Eskimo Murder Trial By Jury," it was written by Fred G. Griffin, but based on the diary of the only anglophone juror, Mr. W.C. Earl, who was the wireless operator aboard the CGS *Arctic*. For details of the trial proceedings, see *RCMP Annual Report* (1923), 33-34. Also see Longstreth, 337, and for a first-hand account, Dudley Copland, *Livingstone of the Arctic* (Canadian Century Press, 1967), 28-29.

⁷⁴ *RCMP Annual Report* (1923), 33.

⁷⁵ Price, 229.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*; also Stevenson, "The Robert Janes Murder Trial," 22.

⁷⁷ Longstreth, 337; also see Copland, 29.

⁷⁸ Pond Inlet Oral History Project: Sam Arnakallak as interviewed by his sister, Elisapee Ootoova (27 September 1994), 8. Sam and Elisapee were children of Nookudlah's wife, but both born after the trial. This same story of this incident at the trial was related by Martha Akumalik (4 June 1994), 6. Martha was age eleven at the time and remembers being at the trial. Both Sam and Martha believed that the Inuit were saved from death by an unnamed person, who stopped the proceedings, then made the translator speak more slowly.

⁷⁹ *Toronto Star*, *op cit.* (copy in RG 18, vol. 3293, file HQ-681-G-1 vol. 2)

⁸⁰ *RCMP Annual Report* (1923), 33.

⁸¹ Stevenson, "The Robert Janes Murder Trial," 23.

⁸² *RCMP Annual Report* (1923), 33.

⁸³ Interview by Oyukuluk, in Cowan (1976), 31.

⁸⁴ *RCMP Annual Report for the year ending September 30, 1923*, 34.

⁸⁵ Interview (4 June 1994), 6.

⁸⁶ *RCMP Annual Report* (1923), 33.

⁸⁷ *Toronto Star Weekly*, *op. cit.*

⁸⁸ RG 85, vol. 602, file 2502 (pt 2), Decoded telegram message, 28 September 1923.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, J.D. Craig, "Report on the C.G.S. Arctic Expedition for 1923," 29 September 1923, pp. 7, 9.

⁹⁰ "Dramatic Account of Eskimo Murder Trial in Far Northland," *Quebec Telegraph* (2 October 1923).

⁹¹ RG 18, vol. 3281, file 1920 HQ 681-G-8 (vol. 5). Correspondence pertaining to his departure; report on Nukudlah's return, 25 August 1925.

⁹² Richard Finnie, "Farewell Voyages: Bernier and the 'Arctic,'" *The Beaver* (Summer 1974). See photo, page 53.

⁹³ Finley McInnes Papers, private collection temporarily housed in Trent University Archives, RG WC 2-A, vol. 1, file 10 'Pond Inlet,' Report on "Nookudlah, Eskimo Prisoner," 30 June 1926.

⁹⁴ *The Quebec Telegraph*, final edition (5 October 1923): 10.

⁹⁵ RG 18, vol. 3297, file 1923-HQ-681-G-1 (Peeawahto) Correspondence: Commissioner Starnes to Sir Joseph Pope, 9 June 1923; Pope to Starnes, 13 June 1923; Starnes to O.S. Finnie, 18 June 1923.

⁹⁶ *RCMP Annual Report* (1922), 35. Kevetuk, as it appears in the early RCMP reports, is used here, although the current spelling is Kivitoo.

⁹⁷ Kivitoo is the usual spelling for this community, although it no longer exists. Kevetuk, however, appears on all early RCMP reports.

⁹⁸ RG 18, vol. 3293, file 1922-HQ-681-G-5, Report by A.H. Joy, 13 April 1923.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, Joy to OC, RCMP Headquarters, 7 September 1922.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, Wilcox to Starnes, 10 September 1923, with the notation by Craig addressed to Cory, the Deputy Minister of the Interior.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, Finnie to Starnes, 17 October 1923.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, Reports by Corporal McInnes, dated 19 and 22 April 1923.

¹⁰³ RG 18, vol. 3667, file G567-66, pt 1. For example, see patrol report by Sgt. Wight, 31 January 1925, in which he reports visiting Kevetuk and providing assurance that the police would make regular patrols and "prevent anyone from controlling the rest on any lines fanatic or spiritualistic."

¹⁰⁴ Grant.

¹⁰⁵ *RCMP Annual Report* (1929), 87.

¹⁰⁶ *RCMP Annual Report* (1928), 77.

¹⁰⁷ See account of a murder/suicide at Home Bay in the early 1930s, Steele, 348.

¹⁰⁸ *RCMP Annual Report* (1934). See report by Const. Corey and the patrol to Imigan, 1 June 1934. By the late 1930s, mediation met with more success and became the preferred option. As an example, see the *RCMP Annual Report* (1932), 100, which describes how an abusive man was captured by fellow Inuit and brought to the trading post at Cape Dorset. He was then transferred to the police detachment at Lake Harbour, where he received a lecture and was returned home.

¹⁰⁹ *RCMP Annual Report for the year ending September 30, 1932*, 96. Also see RG 18, vol. 3663, file G 567-56, pt 1, report 5 February 1938, and attachment 26 October 1938.

¹¹⁰ RG 18, vol. 3663, file G 567-56, pt 1. As an example, see the report by Cpl. MacBeth, 25 September 1935.

¹¹¹ RG 18, vol. 3313, file 1925-HQ-1180-C-2, Nichols to OC, Headquarters Division, 9 September 1926.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, Edwards to Starnes, 13 November 1926; Starnes to Nichols, 18 November 1926.

¹¹³ RG 18, vol. 3313, file 1925-HQ-1180-C-2, Parsons to the Hon. Attorney General, 30 November 1925.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Lancot to Mr. Stewart Edwards, 4 January 1926.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Edwards to Lancot, 25 January 1926.

¹¹⁶ RG 18, vol. 3284, file HQ 1034-C-1, Report from Port Harrison, 12 October 1921.

¹¹⁷ RG 18, vol. 3313, file 1925 - HQ - 1180-C-2, Report by Sgt. J.E.F. Wight, 5 July 1926.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Statement of John Hayward of Pangnirtung, NWT, 5 July 1926.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Edwards to Sale, 9 October 1926.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, Sale to Edwards, 11 October 1926.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, Sale to Edwards, 12 October 1926.

¹²² Letter by S.J. Stewart to Ralph Parsons, dated 13 May 1927 at Port Harrison, and countersigned by Parsons, dated 1 August 1927. Copy of letter supplied by the Hudson's Bay Archives.

¹²³ For full details about the Leaf River movement, see Grant.

¹²⁴ RG 18, vol. 3277, file 1919-HQ-681-G-2, Newcombe to Perry, 9 June 1921.

¹²⁵ Longstreth, 337-338.

14

Dominion Land Surveyors and Arctic Sovereignty in the Early 20th Century

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Concerns over Canada's title to the Arctic Islands mounted in the 1890s following reports of American whalers wintering over in both the western and eastern Arctic. Apart from an expedition to Hudson Strait and Cumberland Sound in 1897, further response was delayed as a result of a more serious threat to Canadian sovereignty arising from the discovery of gold in the Yukon and the dispute over the Alaska boundary. On this issue, the Ministry of the Interior relied heavily on the advice of senior Dominion Land Surveyors who had worked in the region. Yet again in 1920, a seemingly disproportionate number were called upon once more for advice when government officials faced a potential threat to Canada's title over the Arctic Islands.¹ This article identifies who they were and how they had developed their expertise.

While many Canadians are aware of the role played by the Dominion Land Branch in opening the west for settlement, few have considered the attraction of surveying the Alaska/Yukon boundary for young men with a penchant for wilderness exploration and applied science. Moreover, because of joint surveys, many were familiar with their American counterparts. Surveyors such as William Ogilvie and William Dawson are legendary in the history of the Yukon, but less celebrated figures also rose through the professional ranks to attain senior positions in the Canadian civil service. A few developed a keen interest in Arctic sovereignty issues, whereas members of the Geological Survey were understandably more interested in mineral and other resource potential, as were Ontario Land Surveyors.

The link between the Alaska boundary dispute and Arctic sovereignty concerns is best personified in the life work of Dr. William Frederick King, Dominion Land Surveyor (DLS), who in 1903 assisted Minister of the Interior the Hon. Clifford Sifton in preparing the Canadian claim for the Alaska

Boundary Tribunal in London, England. As a result of discussions while aboard ship that spring, Sifton asked King to prepare a full report on the status of Canada's title to the Arctic Islands, even though he had already arranged for the establishment of three new Northwest Mounted Police detachments that summer, two in the western Arctic and one at Fullerton Harbour on Hudson Bay.

Of all the Dominion Land Surveyors, Dr. W.F. King stands apart for his contribution to the understanding of Canada's "imperfect title" to the Arctic Islands.

Born in 1854, King had emigrated from England at the age of eight and settled with his family at Port Hope, Ontario. After three years at the University of Toronto, he took leave in 1872 and spent two years as a sub-assistant astronomer on the HBM Boundary Commission that oversaw the survey of the 49th parallel from the Lake of the Woods to the Rocky Mountains. Returning to university in December 1874, he graduated the following year with a Bachelor of Arts, a gold medal in mathematics and an enviable record as an outstanding scholar.

In 1876, King was granted status as a Dominion Land Surveyor and the first to become a Dominion Topographical Surveyor. Known for his integrity, intellect and analytical mind, he quickly advanced through the ranks of the civil service until appointed Chief Astronomer in 1890. He also served on a long list of boundary commissions, was attached to the Joint High Commission in 1898-99 as an expert on boundaries, and was the founder and director of both the Dominion Observatory and the Geodetic Survey of Canada. Particularly relevant to this study were the two commissions created to survey the southern and northern Alaska boundary (1904-17), headed by Dr. W.F. King for Canada and O. Tittmann for the United States.

In 1904, King was conferred with an LLD by the University of Toronto, for his work on the Alaska boundary. A colleague at the Dominion Observatory wrote that "his very reticence, modesty and lack of self-assertion combined to make knowledge of his work and achievements thoroughly known only to the few who had the privilege of working with him" – perhaps explaining why his name is relatively unknown to most Canadians.²

In terms of Arctic sovereignty, King's major contribution was his confidential *Report upon the Title of Canada to the Islands North of the Mainland of Canada*, submitted to Clifford Sifton as a draft copy in 1904 and published the following year for limited distribution among senior members of parliament, the senate and ministry officials. In his conclusion, King wrote that "Canada's title to some at least of the northern islands is imperfect" and might "be best perfected by exercise

of jurisdiction where any settlements exist.”³ Unfortunately, the most vulnerable islands were uninhabited.

As an interim measure, a series of four expeditions were sent to the High Arctic from 1904 to 1911. The first was commanded by A.P. Low of the Geological Survey on a chartered vessel, the SS *Neptune*. The others were led by Captain J.E. Bernier aboard the newly purchased government ship CGS *Arctic*. In each case, stone cairns were erected at strategic locations and a flag was raised, accompanied by declarations of Canadian sovereignty.

With the defeat of the Liberal government in the fall of 1911, this series of expeditions ended. Instead, the Conservative government funded the more comprehensive Canadian Arctic Expedition (1914-18) led by Vilhjalmur Stefansson, which resulted in extensive scientific studies and the discovery of previously uncharted islands west of Ellesmere. On his return, and hoping to obtain government funding for his proposed reindeer farm, Stefansson initiated correspondence with J.B. Harkin as Commissioner of Dominion Parks, with the warning that parties from Knud Rasmussen’s trading post in northern Greenland were hunting musk-ox on Ellesmere Island and threatening their extinction. Still receiving no support for his proposal or for further explorations, Stefansson requested a meeting of government officials to discuss the proposed Danish Fifth Thule Expedition led by Rasmussen, which he described as a serious threat to Canada’s sovereign title to the Arctic Islands.

A special meeting of the Advisory Technical Board (ATB) reporting to the Department of the Interior was arranged on 2 October 1920 to hear Stefansson’s concerns. This resulted in the creation of a special sub-committee to investigate and advise necessary action. Members of this sub-committee included four Dominion Land Surveyors: Dr. E.G. Deville as chair, Dr. O.J. Klotz as vice-chair, J.J. McArthur and N.J. Ogilvie, as well as two others, J.B. Harkin as secretary and F.C.C. Lynch, Superintendent of the Natural Resources Intelligence Branch of the Department of the Interior. Notable by his absence was Dr. King, who had passed away in 1916. That December, yet another Dominion Land Surveyor, John Davidson Craig, would be appointed “Advisory Engineer” attached to the Northwest Territories Council under the Department of the Interior, with instructions to take over “the sovereignty file” and supervise preparations for an expedition to Ellesmere Island.⁴ All of the above surveyors had been directly or indirectly involved in the Alaska boundary dispute.

Dr. Édouard-Gaston Deville, who chaired the special committee, had been a close colleague of Dr. King, had held the position of the Surveyor General since 1885, and was likely considered the next best informed on the subject of boundaries and international law. Born in France in 1849, he immigrated to Canada at the age of 25. In 1878, he was commissioned as both a Dominion

Land Surveyor and a Dominion Topographical Surveyor. His innovative technology in using photography for mapmaking, especially of the Canadian Rockies, was adopted by the Geological Survey and later the International Boundary Commission. Deville also received an honorary degree from the University of Toronto in 1905, a year after King.

Vice-chair of the special committee, Dr. Otto J. Klotz, was also a close colleague of both King and Deville. Born in Ottawa in 1852 and with secondary schooling in Galt, he went on to study civil engineering in Ann Arbor, Michigan. In 1877, he too had qualified as a Dominion Land Surveyor. His first-hand experience in the Arctic occurred in 1894, when he led an overland party from Saskatchewan to the mouth of the Nelson River on Hudson Bay. Then in 1898, he was sent on a confidential mission to London and Saint Petersburg to obtain information on the Alaska boundary. In 1904, Klotz also received an honorary degree from the University of Toronto and in 1917 succeeded King as Chief Astronomer and the following year as a Director of the Dominion Observatory.

The two other Dominion Land Surveyors on the special sub-committee were James J. McArthur and Noel J. Ogilvie. McArthur was born in Aylmer, Quebec, in 1856 and was known for his mountaineering feats while surveying the Canadian Pacific Railway line through the Rockies. In 1917, he was also a member of the boundary commission responsible for surveying the Alaska-Yukon border and a co-author of the commission's report that year. Noel Ogilvie, on the other hand, was a relative newcomer on the scene. Born in Hull in 1880, he was related to the famous William Ogilvie and had worked on the Canada-Alaska boundary (1909-14). He also worked as an assistant to King and in 1917 replaced him as Superintendent of the Geodetic Survey.

Of the two non-surveyors on the special committee, J.B. Harkin requires special mention, as it was through him that Stefansson initially communicated his concerns and kept in contact with government officials. Although Stefansson's warnings subsequently proved to be exaggerated and blatantly self-serving, at the time they were taken seriously. Harkin's appointment as secretary was particularly appropriate given his early career as an investigative journalist and subsequent appointment as political assistant to the Hon. Clifford Sifton, allowing him first-hand knowledge of the minister's involvement in the Alaska Boundary Tribunal and King's report on the Arctic Islands.

As secretary, Harkin prepared a number of lengthy reports on the importance of Ellesmere Island and the vulnerability of its title. In October and November 1920, the sub-committee reported weekly to the ATB on its findings, concluding in a report to the department with the suggestion, among other options, that RCMP posts should be built on Ellesmere and other islands in the eastern Arctic, supplied annually by a government expedition.

After a report from Loring Christie as legal advisor to External Affairs concurred, arrangements were made in December to proceed with this option under strict secrecy, at which time J.D. Craig was appointed "Advisory Engineer" to oversee the project. Unlike Harkin, who relied on reports derived from sources available to him through departments represented on the ATB, Craig dug deeper into the legal ramifications, seeking additional information from the Department of Justice and Privy Council, as well as from British documents and maps which had not been available to King.

Once he determined that the vague boundaries described in the transfer of the Arctic Islands were because of competing discovery claims by American explorers, the more recent explorations by foreigners could no longer be ignored. The objective in 1921 was to provide effective administration of the most vulnerable regions in accordance with international law and ahead of other countries with competing discovery claims. The consensus was that this would be best accomplished by establishing additional police posts on the Arctic Islands as evidence of "effective occupation," along with an annual supply patrol that might be described as an extension of the A.P. Low and Bernier expeditions to avoid raising public curiosity as to their purpose.⁵

The full story of why the government expedition and the construction of the new RCMP detachments were delayed until 1922 is too complicated to relate here, except that Craig was appointed commander of the first two expeditions now referred to as the Eastern Arctic Patrol, before returning to his work with the boundary commissions. In the end, five new police posts were built in the eastern Arctic: at Craig Harbour on Ellesmere Island, Dundas Harbour on Devon Island, and at Pond Inlet, Pangnirtung and Lake Harbour on Baffin Island.

Significantly, Craig was the only Dominion Land Surveyor to be included in the 1925 committee struck to deal with yet another challenge to Canada's title to the Arctic Islands, this time from the United States Navy. Referred to as the Northern Advisory Committee, this confidential body was chaired by W.W. Cory as Deputy Minister of the Interior, with Dr. O.D. Skelton as Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs assuming the chair in his absence. Aside from Craig and Harkin, members now included the RCMP Commissioner and senior officials of all key departments involved in northern affairs.

In 1921, J.D. Craig was appointed as Canadian Commissioner of the new Canada/U.S. International Boundary Commission (IBC), a permanent body created by the Treaty of Washington. This body essentially replaced the need for the numerous boundary commissions initially established under the Jay Treaty of 1794, then by subsequent treaties or conventions. The first American commissioner appointed to the IBC was Thomas [W.] Riggs Jr., Craig's co-

leader on the joint survey of the northern portion of the Alaska-Yukon boundary. Equally significant was the fact that upon Craig's death in 1931, he was replaced by Noel J. Ogilvie. The function of the IBC has been described as "operational, regulatory, advisory, and custodial," and credited with having successfully avoided potential conflicts along Canada/U.S. borders for over 80 years.⁶

Some historians have suggested that Canadian officials in 1920 were unprepared and confused as to what action was required to establish firm title to the islands of the High Arctic. Perhaps it appeared so on the surface, but thanks to the professional expertise and insightful analysis of senior Dominion Land Surveyors, especially Dr. W.F. King and later J.D. Craig, key officials knew full well what was required to protect Canada's title. What seemed more difficult was convincing their political masters that the financial costs to achieve the goal were essential if Canada was to maintain control over its sovereign rights in the Arctic – a problem still experienced today.

Notes

¹ Additional information and archival references for this article are found in two of my books: *Polar Imperative: A History of Arctic Sovereignty in North America*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2010: pp. 193-246; and *Arctic Justice: On Trial for Murder, Pond Inlet, 1923*. Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002: pp. 24-30, 95-186.

² J.S. Plaskett, "W. F. King," *The Journal of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada*, Vol. X, No. 6 (July-August 1916), 270.

³ Dr. W.F. King, "Report upon the Title of Canada to the Islands North of the Mainland of Canada." Marked confidential, a copy of the printed report dated 1905 may be found in LAC, J.D. Craig Papers, MG30 B57, vol. 1, file "Reports and Memos."

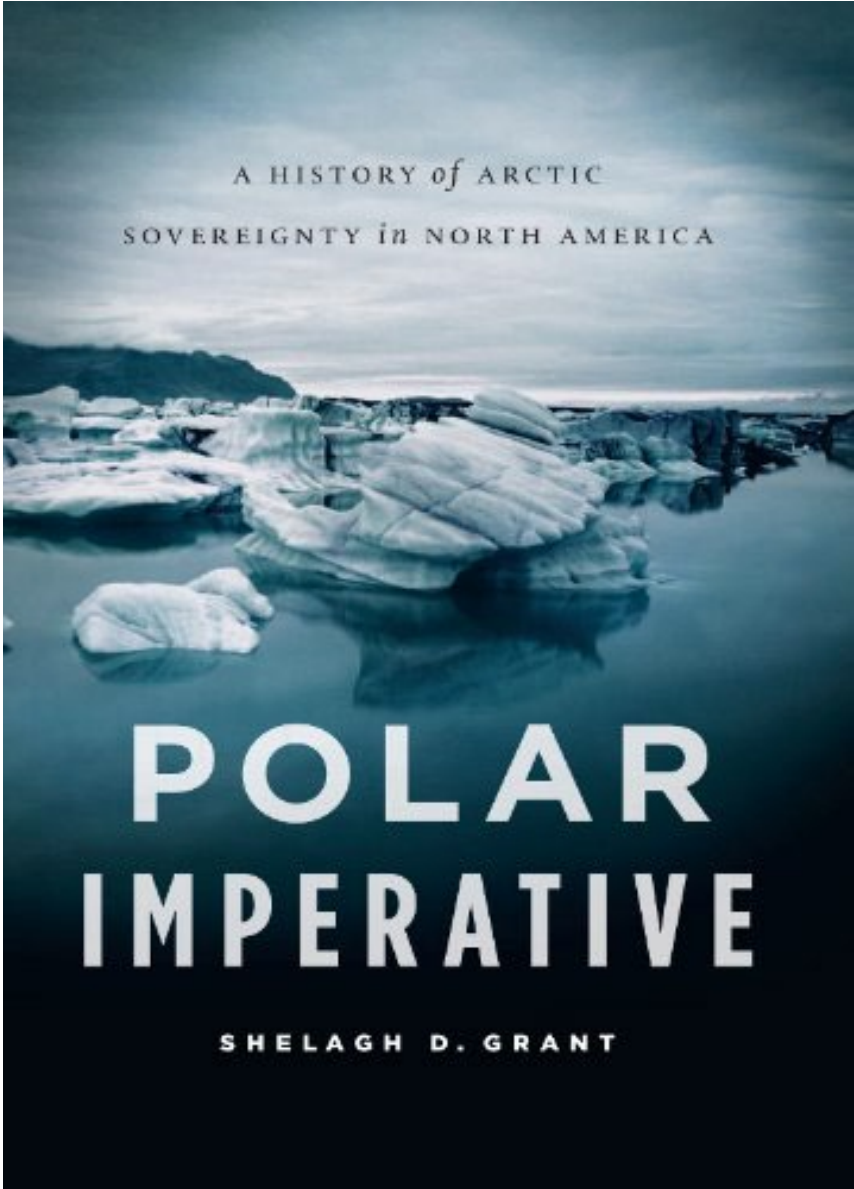
⁴ Craig reported to the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, W.W. Cory, who was also Deputy Minister of the Department of the Interior.

⁵ Most memos and reports connected with the investigations and planning for the project are found in the J.D. Craig Papers, the J.B. Harkin Papers, MG30 E169, vol. 1 and in RG 85, vol. 583, file 571, parts 1, 2 and 3. For reference to the proposed expedition as an extension of the A.P. Low and Bernier expeditions, see all the above: memo from Harkin to Cory, 4 December 1920.

⁶ Alec McEwen, "The Value of International Boundary Commissions: The Canadian/American Experience," paper prepared and presented by the Canadian International Boundary Commissioner at a conference on International Boundary Management, International Boundaries Research Unit (IBRU), University of Durham, UK (September 2001). See also W.J. Banks, "Fixing Friendly Frontiers," *The Rotarian* (September 1941): 19-22.

Section 3

Sovereignty, Canadian Identity, and the Weight of History



A HISTORY *of* ARCTIC
SOVEREIGNTY *in* NORTH AMERICA

POLAR IMPERATIVE

SHELAGH D. GRANT

15

Northern Identity: Barometer or Convector for National Unity?

First published in *"English Canada" Speaks Out*, eds. J.L. Granatstein and Kenneth McNaught (Toronto: Doubleday, 1991).

During the first century of Confederation, many Canadians looked upon their North as a symbol of identity and destiny. Claiming to have originated from a notion that the nation's distinctiveness derived from its northern location, rigorous climate and settlement by northern races, the so-called "myth of the North" acquired a number of interpretations and adaptations to fit changing times. One variant involved a shared spiritual reverence for the northern landscape. Another conjured visions of great future wealth. Overall, the northern ethos offered a sense of national purpose and pride and became a recurrent theme in Canadian nationalist rhetoric.

Some sceptics considered the myth to be little more than a romantic illusion, a jingoist by-product of nation-building euphoria. Most Canadians, however, believed it had a unifying influence. Few seemed aware of its declining significance in recent years, and fewer, if any, expressed concern. Yet when considered in conjunction with the rise of regionalism and political discord, the declining significance of a northern identity appears linked with the downward spiral of national unity.

The impact of the northern myth on the Canadian psyche is intangible, yet it reflects common aspirations that once inspired loyalty, trust and optimism. When related to visions of a permanent or open frontier, it provided Canadians a promise of greater freedom and opportunity than the old world of their ancestors. In addition, the vast wilderness reaches of the Arctic were perceived as both virile and virginal, symbolizing vague, amorphous dreams, yet centring on a physical entity that exclusively belonged to Canada. As a consequence, concern for any potential threat to northern sovereignty was often obsessive and over-reactive.

The image of North was enhanced by our history, especially that of the fur trade, which tended to romanticize the *voyageurs* and the Hudson's Bay Company. Arctic history played a role as well. English Canadians were inspired by tales of the British Admiralty's search for the Northwest Passage; French Canadians likely identified more with Captain Bernier's expedition to claim sovereignty over the Arctic islands. Pre-contact history of the indigenous peoples who lived in harmony with their environment now gives even deeper meaning to our northern heritage. Although unquestionably derived from quite separate ethnocentric interpretations, the unifying bond of Canada's northern heritage stemmed more from a shared vision of landscape than from similar experience.

At the same time, a quite different image of North evolved that promised tangible wealth through extraction of natural resources. This theme was expounded by developers, businessmen and politicians to justify public and private investment in hinterland development. The focus was on challenge and the future. This northern vision was unifying in the abstract, but disunifying when one region was perceived to benefit at the expense of others. Until the emergence of the environmental movement, little thought was given to the inherent contradictions in the two primary perceptions that combined in Canadians' interpretation of their northern identity: permanent wilderness versus resource development. As long as the North appeared limitless and unsuitable for large-scale settlement, the two perceptions could co-exist and even meld.

From a global perspective, Canada's northernness or *nordicité* created a unique identity in North America, a positive image of what Canadians were, as opposed to what they were not, when measured against their southern neighbour. Canada was the "North" of North America, as distinct from the "American" identity adopted by the United States.

Over the years, the North gradually receded and acquired relative distinctions such as near, mid and far. The lakes, rivers and mountains of the near North became much-revered vacation lands, a respite from urban ills, shared and often envied by American visitors. The mid-North contained pocket frontiers of mining and lumbering towns. The high Arctic was the *ultima Thule* — a symbol of mystery and adventure. Overall, the expanse and beauty of the wilderness gave Canadians a feeling of intense pride in their country's landscape, a pride that was celebrated in art, music and literature.

Canada's northern identity also developed distinctive regional perspectives. Atlantic ports witnessed the arrival and departure of Arctic supply ships, patrol vessels, icebreakers and scientific expeditions, whereas on the Pacific coast, there was the added excitement of the big-game hunters and gold seekers heading to the Yukon. Some provinces attempted to create direct access to the Arctic: Manitoba successfully with the construction of the Hudson Bay Railway,

Ontario unsuccessfully with the Temiskaming and Northern Ontario Railway. Physical links encouraged images of mystery and adventure and gave even greater importance to the myth of promised wealth and destiny.

The Québécois, meanwhile, looked inward for identity, centred more on province, culture and agrarian settlement. Significantly, there was no attempt to create a land bridge to the Arctic, despite the projection of the Ungava peninsula thrusting towards the Archipelago. Roads and rails were only important to bring provincial resources south. For the most part, the Canadian Shield was looked upon as an obstacle, depriving the agriculturally minded Québécois of fertile lands.

Not until the 1970s and the events surrounding the James Bay Project was it apparent that Premier Bourassa's interpretation of Quebec nationalism had acquired a distinct northern vision, one that emphasized conquest and exploitation, with little concern for the indigenous peoples, the protection of their lands or the rest of Canada. Similar attitudes emerged in the resource-rich provinces of British Columbia and Alberta, accompanied by a rise of western nationalism. Such "northern visions" were inspired more directly by provincial economic ambitions than by culture-based nationalism.

In English-speaking Canada, the nation-building component of the northern ethos was still in its ascendancy during World War II, as evidenced by public reaction to the Alaska Highway. The initial optimism made headlines such as "War Unlocks Our Last Frontier ... Canada's Northern Opportunity," which appeared in *The Financial Post*. Other newspapers described "a new North" and the "birth of a new Empire." Lester B. Pearson wrote of "the unexplored frontier, luring the pathfinder into the unknown." Charles Camsell, as Deputy Minister of Mines and Resources, described "the lure of the North as something inherent in the human heart and soul." Significantly, there were no comparable headlines or oratory in Quebec.

Accompanying the euphoria was an outcry against a perceived threat to Canadian sovereignty. In response, the King government paid more than \$123 million to gain clear title to American-built facilities in the North, thus forestalling any claim to post-war use or benefit. The dilemma of balancing sovereignty with security requirements arose again in 1946 during negotiations with the United States for a post-war joint defence agreement. Without a workforce or funds to participate fully in the proposed security arrangements, Ottawa compromised by agreeing in principle to American proposals, but with the proviso that each step be negotiated to include tacit recognition of Canadian sovereignty. Where possible, preparations were carried out under "civilian cover" to avoid public criticism, strict censorship was applied because of "political sensitivities," and provision for "Canadianization" was to take place as soon as

possible. The precedent was thus set for all major joint defence agreements. Meanwhile, the federal government publicized its new northern development programs, thus diverting attention away from increasing military activities.

In the 1953 DEW Line negotiations, strict censorship was again requested to “avoid any embarrassment to the government.” At the same time, the department responsible for northern affairs was renamed, expanded and given new leadership and a significantly larger budget. And while it was appropriate for John Diefenbaker as leader of the opposition to criticize alleged abuses of Arctic sovereignty, in 1957 he too followed the set pattern when elected to office. When the NORAD agreement was signed that year, the public was assured that sovereignty was intact, and the election campaign the next spring would promote a national development plan based on a “northern vision” and Canadianization.

To his credit, Diefenbaker attempted to accelerate the Canadian take-over of American and joint-controlled operations but was faced with the same difficulties as his predecessors: a lack of funds, trained workforce and technical equipment. Meanwhile, a *de facto* loss of sovereignty was now more visible as tens of thousands of Americans took part in northern defence construction, air reconnaissance and military exercises. As reports gradually filtered south, the lustre of a truly Canadian North began to tarnish.

Once the “cover-up” policy had been introduced, it became politically impossible to expose the situation without incurring public criticism and embarrassment on the world scene. The extent of concealment was not required for reasons of national security; it was simple political expediency. The guise was inherited by succeeding governments. Eventually, however, the degree of American military presence and loss of Canadian control began to surface. A situation that would have been unconscionable in the 1940s was accepted reluctantly, but not without a sense of betrayal. Faced with the embarrassing reality that Canada could not defend its own territory, the northern vision began to lose its virility, the federal government its credibility.

Other problems clouded the romanticized image of the North as militarization began to affect the lives of the Inuit. Destitution, disease and social disorientation not only increased but became more visible. In spite of genuine efforts to provide adequate education and health services, the government could not keep pace. Isolation and censorship restrictions helped slow media exposure, but only in the short term. The once-virginal image of the North began to fade, almost without notice.

Conservative gains in Quebec in the 1958 election were attributed to Union Nationale support, but Diefenbaker’s “northern vision” captured the imagination of English-speaking Canada. The vision was dramatized to promise “future wealth and national sovereignty” and “a new sense of national purpose

and national identity.” According to Alvin Hamilton, Minister of Northern Affairs, “the North represents a new world to conquer... a great vault, holding in its recesses treasures to maintain and increase material living standards.” Although coupled with Canadianization measures to control foreign investment and protect cultural interests, the major emphasis was clearly on resource development and material gain.

The Conservatives made a genuine effort to fulfil their promises. In the process, and perhaps unwittingly, the northern development program would benefit the resource-rich provincial economies to the disadvantage of the others. In addition to expanding transportation and communications within the Yukon and Northwest Territories, the government offered up to \$7.5 million to each province under the Roads to Resources program to develop air, land and sea transportation links to the resource-rich hinterlands. For British Columbia and Alberta, this meant reinforcing and extending ties to the Yukon and Mackenzie Valley. Elsewhere, other north-south connections were established and linked to vertically aligned provincial metropolitan centres. The notable exception was Quebec, whose premier did not welcome the cost-sharing arrangements attached to the grants. Once competition for American markets increased, so did the inter-provincial and federal-provincial turf wars and weakening of east-west bonds.

The loss of a northern identity was not clearly discernible until recently. The northern ethos was still strong during the “*Manhattan crisis*” in 1969 and 1970, when an American oil tanker entered Canadian Arctic waters without first requesting permission, and it was reflected further in public support for the combined environmental/sovereignty solution offered by the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act. On the other hand, there was decidedly less reaction when another American vessel, the *Polar Sea*, made a similar incursion in 1985 and even less concern when part of the solution — the proposed Polar Class 8 icebreaker — was cancelled. The protest against the purchase of nuclear submarines appeared to be driven more by anti-military and anti-nuclear sentiments.

Canadian nationalism experienced a resurgence during the centennial celebrations, but in spite of attempts to promote Canada’s bilingual and binational heritage, a more aggressive Quebec nationalism was on the rise. Other issues began to surface in the 1970s, namely environmental concerns and aboriginal rights. Neither was limited to the North, although related incidents were often northern based. Strong public support for the Berger Commission’s recommendation to defer the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Project seemed to indicate there were still remnants of a northern vision, but for the first time this issue clearly defined the contradiction between the wilderness preservation and development goals inherent in the myth of the North.

The northern ethos was now irreparably fragmented, dividing its adherents into three distinct streams. The grand-design visionaries, who believed that mega-projects were the key to tapping the treasure trove of Arctic resources, absorbed the believers in progress and economic growth. The anti-nuclear, anti-war and environmental movements acquired the more avid northern wilderness devotees. War was declared, with the one side branded as “capitalist pigs” or “big business” and the other labelled as tree huggers, environmental terrorists, aged hippies or anti-nukes. Caught in between were the largest group, the moderates, who sat at home or at their cottages, gazing at their Lawren Harris and Tom Thomson prints, in mourning over the end of a golden era and frightened for the future. Inevitably, the split in the northern identity drastically weakened its unifying influence on Canadian nationalism.

Further weakening of east-west ties took place in the late 1980s with the Free Trade Agreement, with privatization of Crown corporations such as Air Canada and Petro-Canada and with budget cuts to VIA Rail, the CBC and the Canada Council. These policies would combine to have a devastating effect on the credibility of the federal government. As American goods poured north and Canadian jobs went south to the United States, disillusionment intensified. Once the decline of the manufacturing sector set in, the provinces competed even more feverishly for new export markets to bolster sagging economies. Visions shifted south in search of prosperity, with the provinces claiming sole rights to benefits from the resource exports.

Other images of the North were threatened. Wilderness areas were decreasing in size, threatened by increasing population, urban sprawl, industrialization and pollution from resource extraction. The Americanization of oil and gas development and cruise missile testing in the North had a further psychological impact. There seemed less and less reason to be proud of the North, and for many the anger dissolved into helpless despair. The decline of the northern ethos paralleled the rise of national disunity, the two forces seemingly feeding upon each other. In this respect, Canadians’ belief in a northern identity was not merely reflective, or a barometer, of unity, but a critical unifying bond and convector.

Without a common purpose — the bonding fabric of federalism — provincial leaders continued fighting among themselves over economic benefits and with Ottawa over rights. The struggle for political power was largely played out in the constitutional debate. In the end, the failure of the Meech Lake Accord was merely symptomatic and perhaps inevitable. As described by Mordecai Richler, the outcome was “a wasting tribal quarrel that diminishes everyone.” Out of the ashes emerges a much clearer picture of the drastic surgery necessary to restore health to a failing federation.

In the past, national policies designed to encourage unity, such as bilingualism, multiculturalism and the "just society," have lacked staying power, perhaps because they were politically created and force-fed rather than inherent in the Canadian psyche. By contrast, images of North still linger, though they may be fragmented by regional outlook. Perhaps it might be possible to rejuvenate our northern identity and reorient the focus on the 21st century, while emphasizing environmental protection, responsible stewardship, respect for human liberties and aboriginal rights to self-government.

Environmental protection would have been debatable as a unifying cause even three years ago. Recent public opinion polls now suggest otherwise. According to the Angus Reid Poll released in April 1991, 76 per cent of all Canadians agreed that "government should keep environmental protection as a priority during a recession, even if it means a slower economic recovery." Only 20 per cent disagreed. More surprising was the fact that results in Ontario and Quebec were almost identical, reporting 78 per cent and 77 per cent respectively. Yet in May, the federal throne speech virtually ignored environmental concerns and instead promised economic prosperity as a panacea if Canadians would embrace national unity. Whether by ignorance, incompetence or self-denial, the government proved itself to be totally out of touch with more than three-quarters of the population.

We must not overlook other means of rebuilding a northern identity and national unity. Instead of isolating the territorial North as an inferior entity, a firm timetable should be set for the imminent creation of three new northern provinces in the Yukon and Northwest Territories, with full control over their natural resources. A renewed northern focus would stress closer ties with other circumpolar nations at all levels of government, with special emphasis on environmental protection, concerns of the indigenous peoples, new economic ties, co-ordinated development and exchange of scientific expertise.

Our present military policy, in particular, requires revision. Canadian NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) forces should be returned home and retrained to assume full responsibility for "defence" of the North. Emphasis would be on peacekeeping, surveillance, search and rescue, and communications. Naval forces could be strengthened, but with vessels designed for Arctic use, and closely co-ordinated with Coast Guard efforts. Similarly, the Canadian Rangers, who are now active in sparsely settled northern regions, could be upgraded as armed forces reserves to assume various functions of the RCMP and to act as environmental ombudsmen.

The Free Trade Agreement should be carefully reconsidered and perhaps renegotiated to fit our northern-specific interests. We are not an important industrialized nation, nor will we be, until we can bring our manufacturing sector

into proper balance with our exports of raw resources. If the present trend continues, we are in serious danger of becoming akin to a Third World nation.

Canada, as a sovereign nation, has inherent responsibilities to all its citizens. If the Québécois choose to secede, then northern Indians and Inuit should decide if their lands — transferred in 1912 to Quebec *as a province of Canada* — should remain part of a revitalized Canada or be absorbed into a new Quebec sovereign state. If they were to choose the former, negotiations would follow to arrange a rental agreement for the lands covered by the James Bay Project. Presumably, there would have to be similar arrangements to cover use of the St. Lawrence Seaway and disposition of federal property within Quebec. In the event of secession, the unravelling of existing ties will be onerous and painful, but regardless, if sovereignty is the will of a Quebec majority, Canada must focus its energies towards the creation of a truly democratic and happily united country.

A successful renewal of Canadian federalism can be achieved only if all existing provinces and territories, including representatives of the original peoples, contribute to its design, and if all Canadians have the opportunity to vote on its approval. The rebirth of a new northern identity — combining the ethics of sustainable development with the vision of prosperity, environmental protection with the image of wilderness, settlement of aboriginal rights with social justice, and self-defence with peaceableness — would add further inspiration and motive. Perhaps then, Canadian nationalism could regain its true *raison d'être* of unifying the country.

16

The Weight of History in the Arctic

Shelagh Grant on why the history of the Arctic is relevant to today's debates over the future of Arctic sovereignty.

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In recent years, discussion about the Arctic has taken centre stage as politicians, resource developers, environmentalists, and indigenous peoples square off with competing visions of a future circumpolar world. When mapping long-term strategies and objectives, we often fail to give due consideration to the importance of history. We must ask ourselves if the history of the Arctic is relevant to today's debates over the future of the Arctic, and if so, why?

The history of Arctic sovereignty reveals a number of “game changers” that previously altered the *status quo*, as well as several general trends. The most striking “game changer” was the end of the great ice age, which eventually saw waves of Palaeo-Eskimos slowly moving from Siberia eastward to Greenland. The last wave of these hardy migrants did not survive the little ice age. However, around 1250 BC, a group of whale hunters from the Bering Strait would arrive in Northern Greenland. Considered ancestors of present-day Inuit, they had sophisticated weapons and means of transportation that allowed them to survive the little ice age.

A more dramatic effect of the little ice age was the disappearance (around AD 1400) of two large farm colonies located in Southern Greenland. Norwegian Vikings emigrating from Iceland established the farm colonies (around AD 980), over 200 years before the arrival of the Thule Inuit and 500 years before the alleged discovery of America by Christopher Columbus.

The colonies were Christian settlements, overseen by a Catholic bishop who reported to Rome, yet governed and taxed by the king of Norway upon whom

they were dependent for trade. At one time, the two settlements were believed to have a combined population of over 3,000, a sizable colony by New World standards. At the onset of the little ice age, trade with Norway came to a halt and the Viking farmers disappeared without a trace – the first indication that climate change, coupled with adverse economic conditions, might affect the ability to retain control over one's lands.

The “game changers” in the following centuries were more subtle and gradual, but their impact was accumulative. There were technological advances – first in ship design, then the introduction of the steam engine, then sophisticated navigational aids – that coincided with changing demands for Arctic resources from fish, whales, ivory, and furs, to coal. Today, demand is centred on minerals, oil, and gas.

During this period, it was realized that a loss of control over the northern sea routes tended to precede loss of sovereignty – as in the case of the Netherlands, which abandoned its claims to Greenland, or in Russia's sale of Alaska to the United States. If this indicates a precedent, then preservation of a current Arctic country's sovereign rights will be largely dependent upon its ability to control the adjacent waters.

There were other historical influences directly or indirectly affecting Arctic sovereignty. The struggle for power in Europe, resulting in continuous wars, brought subsequent shifts in naval and economic power that would see the Spanish, Basque, and Portuguese fishermen depart from northern waters. The French followed and finally the Dutch, who had once maintained a dominant presence in Maritime history. The Dutch never regained their former stature after their merchant fleet and navy were decimated during the Napoleonic Wars. Even Norwegians lost their longstanding rights to Greenland when the 1814 Treaty of Kiel separated their country from Denmark.

By the mid-nineteenth century, the Arctic was largely controlled by Britain and Russia, with lesser areas governed by Norway and Denmark, the latter through the colonization of Greenland. Fifty years later, the United States became a major player as a result of the purchase of Alaska and the modernization of the U.S. navy. Canada acquired a larger portion of the Arctic mainland and islands through the annexation of the Hudson's Bay Co. lands and the British transfer of the Arctic Islands, but it remained without a navy or even a government ship capable of monitoring foreign activities in its Arctic region.

With the exception of the Russian and British fur trading companies, European exploration of the Arctic during the nineteenth century was motivated more by national pride than the expectation of materially benefiting from permanent settlement – the British Admiralty explorations being a prime example. Other countries would follow suit, notably Norway and Russia. Their

Arctic explorers became national heroes. Their longstanding history of Arctic identity may explain public support in the two countries for economic development of the Arctic, compared to the United States and Canada, whose historical association with the Arctic is relatively recent.

Once Robert Peary declared that he had reached the North Pole and claimed it for the United States and Norwegian Roald Amundsen successfully sailed through the Northwest Passage, it would be almost forty years before another ship (a Canadian RCMP vessel, *St. Roch*, in an effort to support the war in the eastern Arctic) traversed the Northwest Passage. But the “race to be first” was far from over – modern-day explorers continued to compete for Arctic records by air balloon, dirigible, airplane, and on foot.

Success in these races brought honour and glory for the explorers’ respective countries.

In Canada, however, another race was quietly taking place. Canada had discovered in 1905 that the British title to its remaining Arctic lands – transferred to Canada in 1880 – was *inchoate*. It took twenty-five years for Canada to secure her title to the Arctic Islands through acts of administration or other means of “effective occupation.” That Canadians came to perceive the United States as the major threat to securing title to the Arctic Archipelago was perhaps inevitable, given their still-vivid memories of the War of 1812 and the Alaska boundary dispute.

Associating the Arctic with national achievement gained further momentum during the Second World War (despite the fact that the new science and technologies that were applied were American). The war also marked a new era in Canadian-American relations. Although Canadians were slow to abandon their concerns about American intentions, wiser heads eventually prevailed. The Department of External Affairs, the State Department, and the Permanent Joint Board on Defence set down written guarantees that Canada’s Arctic sovereignty would be protected. How postwar measures such as NORAD and the DEW (Distant Early Warning) Line were presented to the public simply reflected an accommodation between reality and the need to quell potential protests.

During the Cold War, national pride was inherent in the media frenzy extolling the right to defend one’s country. Both the United States and the Soviet Union would spend exorbitant sums on scientific research and development to support their military actions. Although many American activities took place in the Canadian Arctic, Canada’s contribution was likely proportionate to the country’s population, available manpower, and financial resources. Eventually, the excitement of conquering the Arctic frontier was replaced by new horizons on the space frontier. Tensions further eased with the demise of the Soviet Union. Yet just as Canadians found it hard to dismiss the notion that the United States

posed a threat to their Arctic sovereignty, Americans found it difficult to consider Russia an ally rather than the enemy.

There are other lessons to learn from history than simply how and why we travelled down a certain path. While it is true that it took a hundred years for Canada's relationship with the United States to turn from one of suspicion and distrust to one of cooperation and respect, we cannot afford the luxury of waiting another hundred years to establish similar bonds with Russia and other Arctic nations. Better understanding of their cultural histories is a critical first step towards tolerance and acceptance of their differences.

If the overriding goal among the eight Arctic countries is to preserve peace and stability in the region, then the greatest threat may be potential interference from non-Arctic countries that may consider the Arctic "a global commons." Such countries may have little interest in protecting the rights of existing circumpolar states and even less concern for the protection of the fragile northern environment. Whether the threat is overt, implied, or just potential, the Arctic Council may be the best forum in which to determine a cooperative way to move forward. Canada's chairing of the Council over the next two years offers an excellent opportunity to establish norms of accommodation and goodwill.

The success of the Arctic Council since its inception has depended upon finding common ground amongst the eight countries and their respective indigenous peoples. To gain consensus requires mutual understanding of the biases and priorities of countries that differ vastly in size, population, culture, and history. Understanding our own history is only a starting point; we must begin to think "outside the box." We must also remember that Arctic sovereignty is more than a legal right. It is a responsibility for the environment and the people who call the Arctic their homeland. Only time will tell whether we have incorporated this and other lessons from the past into our visions for the future.

17

Arctic Governance and the Relevance of History

Delivered at the Arctic Governance in North America Conference, Oxford University, 26-27 September 2013, co-sponsored by the Rothermere American Institute and the North American Studies Program, Oxford University, Oxford, United Kingdom. Later published in *Governing the North American Arctic: Sovereignty, Security, and Institutions*, eds. Dawn Alexandria Berry, Nigel Bowles, and Halbert Jones (London: Palgrave Macmillan, UK, 2016), 29-49.

In discussion of current issues, the relevance of history is too often ignored or disregarded as insignificant. Yet in the case of Arctic governance in North America, there are sufficient similarities to previous challenges to warrant closer examination. A cursory glance reveals a number of circumstances that precipitated changes in ownership or authority, such as an abrupt change in climate; wars and economic adversity; technological advances; and increased demand for Arctic resources. In varying degrees, all are present today. History also reveals that the greatest threat to Arctic sovereignty was loss of control over the adjacent waters and major sea routes.¹ Equally significant are differences in demography, cultural traditions, local economies, and political institutions which become self-evident when comparing the histories of Alaska, Arctic Canada, and Greenland. Admittedly, there are obvious similarities in climate, geography, marine life, flora, and fauna, but human factors are critical to understanding the need for tolerance and compromise in devising policies acceptable to all regions. Although cooperation among the Arctic countries has been enhanced by the success of the Arctic Council, increasing competition for the region's resources could become a divisive factor if accompanied by a threat to authority over adjacent waters.

Arctic governance has evolved over the centuries from simple practices exercised by the first inhabitants to enable survival to more sophisticated assertions of authority adopted by European countries. By the early twentieth century, governance gained even greater significance after international law

affirmed that a title based on discovery claims was only temporary or *inchoate*, until permanent settlements or administrative acts provided clear evidence of effective occupation. Hence, the histories of Arctic governance and Arctic sovereignty are closely integrated, with some scholars suggesting they are one and the same.

In terms of historical relevance, there are a number of definitions required to set the parameters of discussion. The first relates to the meaning of Arctic sovereignty. *De jure* sovereignty is a phrase used in international law to refer to having supreme power or title over a region within prescribed boundaries, by political or legal right, and accepted by other nations. *De facto* sovereignty, on the other hand, is a generic or general term used to describe power in fact, or in real terms, but without the political or legal right inherent in *de jure* sovereignty. This term is often used in the negative to refer to a loss of authority or control. Thus, while titles to Greenland, Arctic Canada, and Alaska are secure, the rapid melting of the sea ice has made these coastal countries vulnerable to a '*de facto* loss' of control over the adjacent waters.²

There are also several ways to define the Arctic. For the first inhabitants of the North American Arctic, the lands and frozen waters north of the tree line were without boundaries and known simply as their homeland. Europeans, however, adopted the Arctic Circle as a boundary, an imaginary line just north of 66° North Latitude created by ancient Greek astronomers based on the northern positions of two constellations, *Ursa Major* and *Ursa Minor* (the two bears or *arctos* in Greek). Regrettably, most dictionaries and encyclopedias now use this imaginary line to define the Arctic, which inadvertently excludes most of the Inuit population residing in Arctic Canada and Greenland. Scientists prefer a more appropriate designation based on climate, using the July 10°C isotherm line as the southern border. Canadian historians tend to use the tree line, as it more accurately defines the homelands of the indigenous people of the North American Arctic – the Greenlanders, Canadian Inuit, and Alaskan Eskimos. On the other hand, when the Euro-Asian and North American countries agreed to establish the Arctic Council to deal with common concerns affecting the environment, they chose the Arctic Circle to determine which states would become permanent members, a political decision which had little bearing on human geography, oceanography, or the environment. As a result, eight countries now call themselves Arctic nations, of which two, Sweden and Finland, have no coastline bordering on Arctic waters. Iceland is the only Arctic country with no indigenous population.³

Historical relevance is particularly evident in the evolution of international law, especially laws of the seas, which tended to follow unilateral declarations by world powers with sufficient naval strength to defend their positions. During the

seventeenth century, geo-political cross-currents in the Arctic caused laws of the sea to collide with the law of nations, which had originated in Roman law. Inevitably, the two would become closely connected in modern international law.⁴ Although English customary law had taken precedence over natural law by the late nineteenth century, tensions between the two concepts were still evident in negotiations leading up to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which granted the Arctic coastal states special rights and privileges to protect the fragile environment. The fact that international law is based on precedent and tacit agreement partly explains the preference by modern states for negotiated agreements rather than submission of a dispute to the International Court of Justice. Negotiation and compromise may have avoided warfare in settling maritime disputes, but those countries with superior military and economic power continued to exert major influence on the outcome.⁵

Acquiring sovereign title in the New World has a long and complicated history, beginning with decrees set down in the 1493 Papal Bulls of the Catholic Church. When France challenged Spain's monopoly by claiming that discovery must be accompanied by permanent settlement, King Henry IV devised a plan to use profits from the sale of local resources to fund the colonization of New France – a strategy that was not adopted by the British in the North American Arctic. Instead, the task of building fur trading posts was left to private enterprise.⁶ In fact, only a few nations were willing to take direct responsibility for setting up permanent settlements in the Arctic, notably Imperial Russia, Norway, Denmark, and, after 1867, the United States. By comparison, it was not until the 1920s that the Canadian government attempted to establish permanent settlements in the Arctic Islands. Not until 50 years later did Canada and the United States acknowledge that the Eskimos/Inuit might have specific rights related to their long-standing occupation of the region.

The first humans to inhabit the North American Arctic crossed the frozen Bering Strait from Siberia around 5,000 years ago. Pulling their small wooden sleds over snow and ice, family groups slowly spread eastward with some eventually reaching Greenland. Referred to as Paleo-Eskimos, they were followed over time by waves of new migrants, each with distinctive characteristics. The last to arrive were whale hunters from Alaska, who reached northern Greenland around 1250 A.D. Archaeologists refer to them as the Thule culture, in recognition of the initial discovery of their remains near Thule, Greenland. Because of their sophisticated weapons, large skin boats, and use of dog sleds, the Thule Inuit eventually displaced the Paleo-Eskimos and are considered the ancestors of present-day Canadian Inuit, Greenlanders, and Alaskan Eskimos.⁷ As the longest surviving inhabitants of the North American Arctic, their

homelands are central to their cultural identities and they are determined to protect them for future generations.

Yet, long before the Thule Inuit reached Greenland, Europeans had already settled in southern portions of the island – more than 500 years before Columbus allegedly discovered America. They were Norwegian Vikings, led by Erik the Red, who had been exiled from Iceland. In 986 A.D., he arrived at southern Greenland with 14 ships carrying cattle, sheep, supplies, and roughly 300 men, women, and children. Joined by more families, the Norse established two large farm settlements which were supported by trade with Norway. At their peak, the combined population of the two colonies was estimated to be more than 3,000 – a sizeable number by New World standards. Moreover, the colony survived for over 400 years. These were Christian communities, with a resident bishop who reported to Rome. The farmers had adopted a relatively sophisticated form of government, and by 1300, they were paying taxes to the King of Norway.⁸

The most southerly community, which was called the Eastern Settlement, was the oldest and by far the largest. The Western Settlement lay to the north and was the first to be abandoned. By 1450, however, the farmers and their families had disappeared without a trace. Scholars suggest that it was a combination of the Little Ice Age, a decline in trade, loss of their own ships, and attacks by Portuguese fishermen or perhaps by Thule Inuit who were slowly making their way southward along the west coast of Greenland. Some suggest that the Inuit survived because they were skilled at adapting to a changing environment, whereas the Norsemen attempted to change their environment to fit the traditions of their homeland. All are compelling arguments, but Inuit oral history states only one cause: the end of visits by Norwegian merchant ships, which left the farmers vulnerable to repeated, vicious attacks by foreign fishing vessels.⁹

Based on maps published during the next three centuries (1500-1800), relatively little was known about the Arctic, even though European merchants, with the support of their respective monarchs, had financed numerous expeditions in search of a northern sea route to China. Fishermen also sailed north in search of cod and whales, but competition was fierce – initially between the Spanish, English, Portuguese, and Basques, who were joined later by the Dutch and Danes. This was also an era of larger ships, new technologies, and more sophisticated navigational aids, but the fishermen and whalers tended to keep their maps confidential to avoid competition. Significant to the relevance of history is the influence exerted by competing merchants to gain financial or political support from their respective monarchs and governments, comparable to the immense pressure currently wielded by large industries on their respective governments.

Once whalers began trading with natives for furs and ivory, royal charters were granted to claim lands and adjacent waters, such as the charter granted in 1670 by England to what became the Hudson's Bay Company; Danish charters for Greenland trading companies beginning in 1721; and Imperial Russia's 1799 charter for its Russian-American Trading Company in Alaska. Yet, the purpose of the British charter differed somewhat from that of the others. As the importance of Arctic resources in British trade was negligible in the eighteenth century, the chief British aim was to gain an access route to the lucrative fur resources in the interior, bypassing the French-controlled St. Lawrence waterway.

Maintaining control over the Arctic sea routes proved difficult. Forts were built at major ports, but they still required naval support. Even the large stone fortification built to protect the Hudson's Bay Company post near Churchill fell without a single shot to the French in 1782, only to return to British hands with the signing of the 1783 Treaty of Paris. Almost continuous European wars eventually took their toll, with Spanish, Basque, and Portuguese fishermen the first to depart from the North Atlantic; the French soon after from Hudson Bay; and finally the Dutch, whose merchant fleet and navy were decimated in the Napoleonic Wars. American whalers tended to prefer the North Pacific over the North Atlantic, which was frequented by British whalers throughout the nineteenth century. Furthermore, the US Navy was still in its infancy and after the War of 1812 tried to avoid confrontation with the all-powerful Royal Navy.¹⁰

In terms of Arctic governance, the history of Greenland deserves closer scrutiny. After several unsuccessful attempts to find the lost Norsemen, the kings of Denmark/Norway more or less left Greenland to the English and Dutch whalers. Then, in 1719, a young Norwegian missionary presented King Frederick IV with a plan to reclaim Greenland by creating a combination of mission and trading settlements, with the support of Bergen merchants, the Navy, and the Lutheran Church. Granted a royal charter in 1721, missionary Hans Egede, with his family and 28 settlers, set out for Greenland. More would follow. In spite of hardships and frequent attacks by Dutch and English whalers, the settlements grew in size and number. In 1782, the Danish government took direct control of the Royal Greenland Trading Company, retaining a trade monopoly that isolated the native Greenlanders from foreign influences, but over time provided them with schooling, medical services, and employment opportunities.¹¹ Access to a formal education provided these Inuit with skills needed to adapt to the modern world, well ahead of Canadian Inuit, who had no regular schooling until the mid-20th century. Even Alaskan Eskimos received schooling in the late 1890s as a result of a program established by a Presbyterian missionary and later approved by the US Congress.¹²

Meanwhile, Russia had gradually expanded its control eastward across Siberia, following Peter the Great's launch of the Russian Imperial Navy and the subsequent 'Great Northern Expeditions' in the 1700s. Captain Vitus Bering is credited with the discovery of Alaska in 1741, and Russian fur traders soon followed. Catherine the Great, a strong supporter of the Alaskan fur trade, sent the Imperial Navy to protect the trading posts and their ships from attacks by the English and Spanish. But since she resisted trade monopolies, it was not until after her death that an imperial charter was granted in 1799 to the Russian-American Trading Company. The terms of the charter included provision of medical services and schooling for the Natives under the auspices of the Eastern Orthodox Church. With headquarters on Sitka Island, the company added further trading settlements stretching as far south as to what is now California, but costs were high and competition from British and American traders steadily increased. In an attempt to avoid conflict, Russia negotiated treaties that defined Alaska's boundaries – with the United States in 1824 and Britain in 1825.¹³ Despite their intent, the two treaties failed to protect Russia's sovereign rights in North America.

The nineteenth century witnessed the last major changes to the map of the Arctic as a result of British exploration, American expansionism, and the creation of the new Dominion of Canada. At the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the British Admiralty launched a number of Arctic expeditions with two primary objectives: to discover the Northwest Passage and to be the first to reach the North Pole. While expedition leaders recorded numerous claims to newly discovered lands, these were never ratified by British Parliament – a circumstance that would have later consequences for Canada's title to the Arctic Islands. In mid-century, the Admiralty sent a number of expeditions to search for Sir John Franklin and his ships, after their failure to return from yet another attempt to locate a westward passage through the Arctic Islands. Even then, official maps suggested that knowledge of the region was still very incomplete. Although ships from other nations joined in the search, there was no attempt to register new discovery claims. Nonetheless, the Admiralty ships were "no longer the sole possessors of charts for the area" and now faced potential competition throughout the Arctic Islands.¹⁴

The British Admiralty called off the search for Franklin after another unsuccessful attempt in 1850, partly in the belief that its ships would be needed to protect Britain's interests in the Mediterranean, where Russia was threatening to expand its authority over the declining Ottoman Empire. Yet, even before the onset of the Crimean War in 1854, it was apparent that the British people and their government had lost their appetite for Arctic exploration as news trickled home about the loss of Franklin's ships, starvation of the crew, and possible

cannibalism. The Admiralty sent one more expedition north in 1876. Although promoted as another attempt to reach the North Pole, it also served to secure claims to the northern coast of Ellesmere Island prior to the transfer of the Arctic Islands to Canada. By 1884, however, the United States government also lost interest in the Arctic after the tragic starvation experienced by the Greely expedition on northern Ellesmere and announced it would no longer finance polar exploration.¹⁵

Henceforth, it would be leaders of privately funded expeditions who sought to achieve the honours and prestige once sought by the British Admiralty – notably Norwegians Fridtjof Nansen and Roald Amundsen, the latter being the first to sail through the Northwest Passage, as well as Americans Robert Peary and Frederick Cook, who both claimed to be the first to reach the North Pole. As described by Stephen Bown in *The Last Viking*, this was an era when polar exploration became an industry requiring skilful publicity to ensure financial compensation from articles, interviews, and public lectures. Although claiming honour and glory for their respective countries, this was only secondary to the ambitions of the new age explorers. This period also witnessed the manipulative power of the press on public perceptions with melodramatic stories of the Arctic and its heroic explorers. Accuracy did not seem important as long as the headlines sold newspapers.¹⁶

For the British Admiralty, the Crimean War might be considered a distraction that demanded a diversion of financial resources once allocated to Arctic exploration – perhaps somewhat similar to the effect of the current unrest in the Middle East on the US Coast Guard's repeated requests for new icebreakers and port facilities to monitor increased foreign shipping in Alaskan waters. Although major wars might create new alliances, they could also reinforce old rivalries. Such was the case with the Crimean War, which served to intensify the animosity between Russia and Great Britain. In spite of a neutrality agreement for the Russian-American Trading Company, British ships blockaded their vessels in Alaskan ports and seized them on the high seas. By 1860, the company's losses were extensive and Russia was in severe financial straits. Reluctantly, Tsar Alexander II agreed to sell Alaska to the United States to prevent it from falling into British hands, suggesting that the territory had become a by-product of the spoils of war, with the United States a winner by default.

When approached by the Russian ambassador in March 1867, US Secretary of State William Seward quickly signed a tentative purchase agreement. In spite of harsh criticism and intense debate, he gained congressional approval, and the cession of Alaska was officially declared on 20 June – just 11 days before the new Dominion of Canada came into being.

Aside from potential economic benefits, Seward believed that the purchase would provide incentive for the American annexation movement in British Columbia. He also proposed that the United States purchase Greenland in hopes that eventually all Canadians would seek annexation, thus fulfilling the vision that it was the United States' 'manifest destiny' to someday embrace the entire North American continent. This time, however, his proposal to the US Senate fell on deaf ears and was never debated.¹⁷ Furthermore, after the Greely disaster and with the US Navy still under major reconstruction, the US government showed little interest in expanding its influence northward, especially when faced with the challenge of re-unifying its country after the Civil War.¹⁸

Although economic benefits from the Alaskan purchase would prove far greater than Seward predicted, instead of encouraging British Columbia to join the United States, the purchase of Alaska served as a catalyst to Britain's actions to prevent its remaining North American possessions from falling into the hands of the United States – at least under its watch. Thus, in 1870, Canada's Prime Minister John A. Macdonald was pressured into annexing the Hudson's Bay Company's lands, with Britain loaning the money to fund the deal. Then, just four years later, in 1874, the British Colonial Office offered to transfer the Arctic Islands to the new Dominion. Advised by the Admiralty that their maps were incomplete, British officials refused Canada's request that the transfer be legislated by an act of parliament with the boundaries clearly defined. Instead, the transfer of the Arctic Islands was made in 1880 by a simple order-in-council, with only a vague definition of boundaries and without the approval of British Parliament.¹⁹

As a consequence, within 13 years of its creation, Canada had become one of the world's largest countries in size but with a miniscule population and no navy or even a government ship capable of sailing in the Arctic to monitor activities in its newly acquired lands. Moreover, a quarter century would pass before Canadian officials were aware of any potential weakness in the Dominion's title to the Arctic Islands. In fact, despite earlier warnings that American whalers were occupying lands belonging to Canada, it was not until the Alaska boundary dispute at the turn of the century that politicians expressed serious concern about a possible threat to its Arctic sovereignty. Were their fears justified? Or were Canadians just overly sensitive to threats of American expansionism, fuelled by overzealous agitation by the newspapers?

In the case of Herschel Island, lying offshore from Canada's Northwest Territories, concerns may have been justified. In 1889, officers of the USS *Thetis* had charted the waters and surveyed the island in preparation for construction of year-round facilities for American whalers. Yet, the US government made no attempt to register a claim to the island. Unknown to Canada at the time, Alaska

offered far greater opportunities than Herschel Island. Even before the discovery of gold, geologists had found oil in Alaska. Claims were filed in 1890, and 20 years later, oil was produced and refined for local use at Katalla on the Gulf of Alaska. Although still too costly to transport south, it was only a matter of time until new technologies and increased demand would make development of Alaskan oil profitable.²⁰

Canadian Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier, however, was sufficiently concerned in 1903 to establish two new police detachments in the Arctic: at Fort McPherson in the west and at Fullerton Harbour on Hudson Bay. The following year, a confidential report by Dr. W. F. King, who at the time was considered the country's foremost expert on sovereign rights and international law, verified the vulnerability of the Arctic Islands to potential challenge. Citing the nature of the British transfer and failure to ratify it by parliament, King argued that the discovery claims had created only a temporary or *inchoate* title. To secure permanent title would require administrative acts and eventually settlements to provide evidence of 'effective occupation'.²¹

Without assistance or sanction by British officials, the Liberal government took immediate action, initially with the purchase of a government ship – CGS *Arctic* – which was sent on three lengthy expeditions to the High Arctic led by Captain J. E. Bernier (1906-11) with a mandate to collect customs duties from foreign whalers, chart uninhabited islands, and claim them for Canada. Laurier's intent was to ensure that there were no existing foreign settlements on the remote islands before building police detachments to support a network of permanent communities comprised of trading posts and church missions.²² No mention appeared in the press releases about any threat to Canada's title. Instead, the Bernier expeditions were promoted as the nation's rightful assertion of authority over the Arctic Islands.

Meanwhile, in response to the Alaska Boundary Tribunal's rejection of Canadian claims, the media continued to fuel fears of American expansionism. As expected, the Canadian public reacted with righteous indignation at any suggestion that the United States might challenge their hard-earned sovereign rights in the Arctic. Having created a sensitivity that sold papers, the larger presses continued to incite public anger at the slightest hint that the Americans might be treading on Canada's sovereign rights in the Arctic, a practice that continued throughout the Second World War and Cold War. As a result, federal election campaigns often included commitments by party leaders to protect Canada's Arctic sovereignty, often accompanied by unrealistic promises of how this might be achieved – as appeared to be the case under the Conservative government from 2006 through to 2015.²³

At the turn of the 20th century, the media frenzy accompanying the Alaska boundary dispute was also fuelled by lingering anti-American sentiments among descendants of Empire Loyalists and an upsurge in Canadian nationalism reflecting an intense pride in the new nation, accompanied by belief in a unique identity that differentiated Canadians from Americans. Often described as 'the myth of the north', Canadians believed that the vast northern wilderness had imparted a unique quality to the nation's character which left a lasting imprint on the national psyche. Reflecting a reverence and respect for the natural environment as portrayed in the paintings by the Group of Seven and a plethora of literature enhanced by photographic images, this vision also included the Arctic – the farthest north or *Ultima Thule* – too often without recognition of its inhabitants. Canada's belief in its northern identity partly explains the determination to protect its Arctic sovereignty, but it was rarely understood by Americans whose nation was born of a revolution and its economic growth driven by expansionism, industrialization, and trade.²⁴

Meanwhile, the Bernier expeditions came to an end in 1911 with the election of a Conservative government led by Sir Robert Borden. Considering the Liberal strategy too costly, Borden instead approved a single, multi-year initiative – the Canadian Arctic Expedition 1913-18 – led by Vilhjalmur Stefansson, who succeeded in discovering four previously uncharted islands. With the return of the Liberal Party to power in 1921, the government expeditions to the Eastern Arctic resumed on an annual basis, initially prompted by fears that Denmark might claim previously uncharted lands discovered by the Fifth Thule Expedition. The Eastern Arctic Patrol, as it was then called, also assisted the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) in building new detachments and performing numerous administrative tasks as evidence of 'effective occupation'. Essentially, this was a resumption of Laurier's earlier strategy to secure Canada's title to the Arctic Islands, but with additional police posts built in the Western Arctic to support the growing number of fur trading posts and church missions.²⁵

By now, however, reports of increasing episodes of Inuit violence had raised new concerns about enforcing Canadian laws and justice. As a result, in 1923, two murder trials were held in the Arctic: one at Pond Inlet on northern Baffin Island and the other at Herschel Island in the Western Arctic. Aside from acting as a deterrent to further violence, the trials were publicized in newspapers and magazines to show that Canada was fully capable of enforcing its laws and administering justice in the remotest regions of the Arctic. For similar reasons, silent films taken each summer of the Eastern Arctic Patrol were shown in American movie theatres and to audiences in Greenland.²⁶

Although the Great War had no direct impact on the North American Arctic, the advances in aviation technology made the region accessible to more people

and over longer periods of time. It also prompted a 1925 American expedition, in which United States Navy (USN) Lt. Commander Richard Byrd used two amphibian biplanes to explore portions of Ellesmere Island and the islands to the west.²⁷ Fearing that the United States intended to claim previously uncharted lands, the Canadian government took immediate action under advisement by Dr. O. D. Skelton, the newly appointed Assistant Secretary of State for External Affairs. Aside from interception of the Byrd expedition by the Eastern Arctic Patrol, a new police detachment would be built on Ellesmere Island's Bache Peninsula, further legislation passed requiring licenses for Arctic exploration, and the Arctic Islands Game Preserve established to provide an additional vehicle for law enforcement. Also under Skelton's direction, an agreement was negotiated to purchase the maps and notes of Norwegian explorer Otto Sverdrup, who had charted and laid claim to several Arctic Islands. In return, Norway agreed to support Canada's claim to the entire Archipelago.²⁸

Norwegians may have lost their ties to Greenland and the Faroe Islands when their country was separated from Denmark in 1814, but not their passion for Arctic exploration, as evident in the exploits of countrymen Fridtjof Nansen and Roald Amundsen. After successfully gaining sovereign rights to the Svalbard Islands in 1920, Norway attempted to lay claim to East Greenland. Denmark protested, and in 1933 the Permanent Court of International Justice (PCIJ) handed down a landmark decision granting Denmark rights to all of Greenland. This decision also gave greater force to Canada's title over the Arctic Islands.²⁹

Slowly but surely, the Canadian government accumulated clear evidence of 'effective occupation' to secure permanent title to the Arctic Islands, but it did so at considerable financial cost and without assistance from Great Britain or a major confrontation with the United States. Although the United States originally maintained that uninhabited portions of Archipelago were a *terra nullius*, by 1939 American officials appeared to accept that Canada had established clear title to the islands.³⁰ On the other hand, the United States continued to reject Canada's claim that the Northwest Passage was internal waters, a dispute that has yet to be resolved.

When signs of German aggression again surfaced in the mid-1930s, American officials prepared detailed plans for continental defence that included protection of the entire North American Arctic. Thus, after Denmark fell to the Germans in April 1940, the United States – although restricted by the terms of the Neutrality Act – immediately assumed the right to protect Greenland, citing the Monroe Doctrine as justification. The Greenland Patrol was established utilizing the US Coast Guard's icebreakers, with its primary objective to protect the cryolite mine at Ivigtut on the southwest coast – cryolite being a relatively rare mineral required in the manufacture of aluminum for warplanes. Abiding by the

terms of the Neutrality Act, members of the coast guard were released from service and supplied with arms to act as volunteer guards to defend the mine.³¹

Upon entry into the war after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the United States immediately began to implement its defence plans, which included construction of an extensive network of airfields, weather stations, and radar installations in Greenland, Labrador, and northern Canada. The projects were extensive – at one time, the number of US military [personnel] and civilians in the Canadian Northwest was reportedly greater than the Canadian population, including native Indians and Inuit. Some Americans called themselves ‘the Army of Occupation’.³² Yet, all the projects in Canada were considered joint operations and approved by mutual agreement through the Permanent Joint Board on Defence, a body which is still responsible for approval of Canadian-American security measures. Although many of these wartime agreements involved a ‘de facto’ loss of sovereignty, Canada’s sovereign rights were considered protected by written statements attached to approvals for each project.³³

The wartime activities also marked the assumption of American military hegemony over the North American Arctic, a policy still central to current United States policy as described in the ‘National Strategy for the Arctic Region’, released by the White House in May 2013. Of somewhat lesser importance, US policy now includes responsible stewardship of the Arctic region alongside strengthening international cooperation through the Arctic Council and other bilateral and multilateral organizations. While there may appear to be a slight decrease in interdependence, the United States and Canada remain inseparable allies in defence of North America.

As the war was nearing an end, Canada attempted to encourage the early departure of US forces and limit long-term benefits by paying for all permanent structures built by Americans on Canadian soil. An abrupt change of plans came about as a result of Soviet actions in East Berlin and the spy network revealed by defector Igor Gouzenko. An ally during the war, the Soviet Union was now considered an enemy. After prolonged negotiations, Canada and the United States announced a Mutual Defense Cooperation Agreement in February 1947, which allowed further construction of weather stations and airfields in the Canadian Arctic. With the detonation of Soviet atomic test bombs, initially in 1949 and a hydrogen bomb in 1953, the onset of the Cold War was inevitable. US military activities in northern Canada escalated, including extensive early warning radar systems and airplane and submarine surveillance.³⁴ In northern Greenland, a large offensive air base with a nuclear ballistic missile site and submarine berth was constructed in 1953 at Thule, in addition to three Distant Early Warning stations to the south – all covered by agreement with Denmark

as part of its contribution to NATO. In 1958, an exchange of notes between Canada and the United States created the North American Air Defence Command (NORAD) to unify air defence of the two countries. Eventually, Ballistic Missile Early Warning System (BMEWS) installations would provide protection stretching from Alaska across northern Canada and Greenland to England.³⁵ In Alaska, there was also an increased military presence including 200 interceptor planes and 16,000 air force, army, navy, and coast guard personnel.³⁶

Not all Canadian efforts to secure its sovereignty in the Arctic Islands were above reproach. The Eskimo Affairs Committee, created in 1952 to deal with welfare problems, suggested that Inuit families might be moved from areas of dwindling fur resources to the uninhabited High Arctic. Inevitably, the proposal became part of a larger discussion on how to protect Canada's Arctic sovereignty under potential threat by new increases in US military activities. One estimate indicated that there might be 1,200 American military [personnel] and civilians in the District of Franklin compared to 140 Canadians (the Inuit population was not included). Initially, the plan was to send Inuit families from northern Quebec to work at the new airbase at Resolute. When neither the RCAF nor the Canadian Weather Bureau was prepared to foot the bill for their accommodation, plans abruptly changed. The relocation project was now described as an 'experiment' to see if the Inuit from southern locations could survive in the High Arctic. As a consequence, they were placed in camps distant from the police detachments lest they became too dependent on their help while adapting to their new environment. The project may have provided a small Canadian presence in otherwise uninhabited lands, but the hunting was poor and families encountered severe hardships. Although promised that they could return in two or three years, requests to do so were refused.³⁷

Angry protests finally led to a Royal Commission of Inquiry in 1991, which resulted in payment of compensation to the relocated families, arrangements for their return to their original homelands if desired, and finally, in 2010, an official apology from the Canadian government. Unlike Russia and Denmark, which had relocated indigenous families to bolster their Arctic sovereignty claims in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Canadian government failed to provide housing and basic services at the time of transfer.³⁸ In this instance, historical relevance lies in the fact that the Canadian government found it difficult to ignore Inuit demands when negotiating terms of the new Nunavut Territory and other agreements on various forms of Inuit self-government. Inuit traditionally have long memories and are no longer content with simply being 'consulted' on issues affecting their future.

The post-war and Cold War years witnessed continued reliance on negotiated agreements and treaties to resolve potential disputes over sovereign rights.

Although details of Canadian-American cooperation on defence were confidential, discussions on matters of trade and energy were more open, especially after the discovery of oil in Prudhoe Bay, Alaska. As might be expected, the Canadian media again incited a public outcry in 1969, when Humble Oil sent the super-tanker *SS Manhattan* on a trial run through the Northwest Passage without first requesting approval from the Canadian government. Prime Minister Trudeau responded by introducing the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act (AWPPA), which created a 100-nautical-mile offshore zone over which Canada had the authority to enforce anti-pollution regulations – a unilateral action taken ahead of international law. At the time, the act represented a declaration of special rights to achieve recognition of sovereign authority.³⁹ Despite the initial intent, the AWPPA and subsequent revisions are now considered critical to protect the fragile environment.

In 1985, the Canadian media again aroused public concern that Canada's authority was threatened when the United States Coast Guard (USCG) icebreaker *Polar Sea* sailed through the Northwest Passage without government approval. This time, the Canadian government responded by drawing baselines around the Archipelago and declaring all waters within to be internal waters and subject to Canadian laws. To resolve a potential rift in Canadian-American relations, a carefully crafted Arctic Cooperation Agreement was signed by both countries in 1988, which declared that navigation by US government ships in waters claimed to be internal would be 'undertaken with the consent of the Canadian government'. In essence, the agreement resolved immediate tensions by acknowledging the right of both Canada and the United States 'to agree to disagree' over the status of the Northwest Passage.⁴⁰ But it also served as a reminder that Canada's jurisdiction over its internal waters remains vulnerable to challenge.

During this period, diplomatic initiatives that indirectly involved the Arctic were becoming more multi-national, as evident with the increasing number of international aviation and shipping associations – including the International Maritime Organization (IMO) responsible for establishing criteria for safe shipping throughout the world. In 1956, the United Nations held its first conference on the 'laws of the sea' with the intent to establish an international agreement to replace the existing 'freedom of the seas' concept that dated back to the seventeenth century. After a series of meetings and intense negotiations, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) was finally concluded in 1982 and came into force in 1994 after ratification by 60 nations. Of particular importance for Canada was Article 234, which allows enforcement of its AWPPA within the Exclusive Economic Zone that extends 200 nautical miles beyond the baselines drawn around the Archipelago. Russia ratified the

agreement in 1997, and Canada in 2003. The United States is the only Arctic country refusing to ratify the treaty. With increasing pressure from the US Navy and Coast Guard, some officials suggest that it is only a matter of time.⁴¹

Meanwhile, the creation of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC) in 1972 marked a major step in advancing Inuit interests in North America. Initially prompted by concern over increased drilling and shipping arising from the discovery of oil in Prudhoe Bay, the ICC would see Greenlanders, Canadian Inuit, and Alaskan Eskimos join forces to ensure the protection of their environment. Later, the few Inuit still residing in Russia's Chukchi Peninsula were added to the membership. Supported by a dedicated and energized executive, the ICC produced a 'Comprehensive Arctic Policy' which clearly laid out its concerns and objectives.⁴² The organization was not only effective in asserting its influence on local issues but succeeded in gaining international recognition for Aboriginal Rights. The adoption of the Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the UN General Assembly in 2007 is one example; Inuit representation as permanent participants on the Arctic Council is another. Of particular significance to current issues was the ICC's 'Declaration on Arctic Sovereignty' in 2009, which declared that 'industrial development of the natural resources of the Arctic can proceed only insofar as it enhances the economic and social well-being of Inuit and safeguards our environmental security'.⁴³ Lofty ambitions, but as noted earlier, the Inuit of North America are not content to be merely 'consulted' on decisions affecting their future as suggested in some government policy statements, including those of the European Union and the United States.⁴⁴ Other nations might also take note that in a 2008 referendum, Greenland voted overwhelmingly in favour of future independence from Denmark.⁴⁵ Again, lofty ambitions but driven by determination.

Denmark and the United States continued to cooperate on security issues during the Cold War, although the Danish government gradually resumed responsibility for naval and coast guard protection of Greenland. The Thule Air Base was downsized after the fall of the Berlin Wall, but it is still home to the 821st Air Base Group and the 12th Space Warning Squadron responsible for the Ballistic Missile Early Warning Site. The former Distant Early Warning Systems in Canada and Alaska were upgraded and automated, with the United States still directly involved in their operation. The stations in Greenland, however, have since been abandoned. Canada, meanwhile, acquired full control of the Joint Arctic Weather Stations (JAWS) and their airfields. The Cold War's end also brought about closer ties between the Russian Federation and Norway, especially with regards to resource development and use of the Northern Sea Route.⁴⁶

Increasing cooperation among the circumpolar countries was evident by the early 1990s but took a giant step forward in 1996 with the creation of the Arctic Council. Members included the eight states with lands touching on, or north of, the Arctic Circle, along with representatives of several indigenous groups assigned as permanent participants. Perhaps because the frozen Arctic Ocean at the time offered only scientific interest for non-Arctic countries, no one challenged the right of the eight Arctic States to assume responsibility for the region and its adjacent waters.⁴⁷ With the rapidly melting sea ice cover, however, the situation has changed, raising concerns about whether the unity expressed by the circumpolar countries can withstand pressure by non-Arctic countries for more direct say in governance of the Arctic Ocean and for greater access to the mineral-rich seabed. The rights of Arctic countries to enforce laws in their adjacent waters are already being challenged, especially with regard to the Northwest Passage and Northern Sea Route. For example, in June 2013, the International Chamber of Shipping argued that ‘the UNCLOS regime of “transit passage” of straits used for international passage supersedes the rights of coast states’ and demanded an end to discriminatory action by the Arctic States against ships registered with non-Arctic nations.⁴⁸ Moreover, although the need was urgent, the IMO has been slow to gain approval for a mandatory polar code.

Numerous lessons from the past can be applied to planning future governance in the North American Arctic and throughout the circumpolar region. First and foremost is the vulnerability of existing authority over the sea lanes and adjacent waters to challenge by non-Arctic countries seeking to gain material benefit from commercial shipping. Already, claims that the Northern Sea Route and Northwest Passage are internal waters and thus subject to Russian and Canadian laws have been subjected to criticism, although not physically challenged. Regardless of the outcome, it is imperative that the IMO set out a mandatory polar code with sufficient terms and penalties to prevent future collisions, oil spills, excessive emissions, and dumping of waste in portions of the Arctic Ocean beyond the jurisdiction of coastal states.

Secondly, the rights and concerns of the Eskimos/Inuit of Alaska, Arctic Canada, and Greenland should be recognized as a priority in any discussions on future governance. Having proved adept in adapting to changing physical and political environments, their knowledge and advice will be invaluable as the region undergoes further changes affecting local economies and social infrastructure. Objectives may differ from one community to the next, but growth must be sustainable over time and not subject to the ‘boom and bust’ syndrome associated with previous mining development.

As in the past, the media continues to fuel unrealistic expectations of the Arctic as a treasure trove, a source of untapped riches, or ‘an emerging epicenter

of industry and trade akin to the Mediterranean Sea', with a hype comparable historically to the excitement generated by the Klondike Gold Rush, or more recently the oil and gas discoveries at Prudhoe Bay, Alaska.⁴⁹ Kathrin Keil, writing for the Arctic Institute in Washington, addresses the issue, concluding that 'depicting the Arctic as an economic treasure trove of global importance is exaggerated ... but also it importantly sidetracks the really pressing and difficult problems concerning the future of the region'.⁵⁰ While sober second thoughts appear to be emerging, will they garner sufficient publicity to bring about a more temperate, cautious approach to future development? Or will Canada still be characterized as 'hewers of wood and drawers of water', and thus more likely to accept environmental degradation and pollution associated with resource development? Will the United States be distracted by unrest in the Middle East and unable to comply with requests from the US Coast Guard for more icebreakers and port facilities?

Canada, the Russian Federation, Norway, Denmark, and to a lesser extent the United States have been firm in their commitment to protect their sovereign rights in the Arctic against outside intervention. Unlike bygone years, when naval superiority was required to protect sovereign rights in the Arctic, current plans to strengthen military protection are driven not by fear of enemy invasion but by determination to protect their Arctic waters from non-compliant foreign vessels. Any suggestion that there is need for NATO involvement seems misplaced and could threaten the current cooperation among the Arctic countries who believe that potential conflicts can be resolved on the basis of UNCLOS and decisions of the Arctic Council.⁵¹ But will current military surveillance by the Arctic countries be sufficient to protect the fragile environment? Will Canada's belief in its unique northern identity strengthen its commitment to protect its Arctic lands and waters, or has increasing urbanization and multiculturalism weakened the resolve? Will the Arctic lose its allure as a unique, sparsely populated wilderness and become prey for the mega-corporations who view the region as an under-utilized wasteland, rich in resources, and a potential source for global prosperity?

The history of the North American Arctic does not offer a crystal ball to predict the future, but it does provide important insights into previous successes and failures in governing the region, as well as previous consequences of wars and economic adversity; difficulties in adapting southern technologies to a polar environment; the inclination of overzealous reporters to prey on popular sensitivities; and the tendency to discount indigenous peoples' determination to protect their environment and culture for future generations.⁵² Based on historical precedence, the greatest challenge facing the Arctic States will be their ability to retain control over the sea routes and adjacent waters.

Meanwhile, the various issues have become blurred, interconnected, and increasingly complex. Predictions are now an exercise in futility and scholarly analysis more cautious. But more than ever, the need for commitment and cooperation is essential, both within and between the eight Arctic countries and with full support from the broader global community. Success may seem impossible – but in the words of Norwegian explorer Fridtjof Nansen, ‘The difficult is what takes a little time; the impossible is what takes a while longer’.⁵³

Notes

¹ S. D. Grant (2010) *Polar Imperative: The History of Arctic Sovereignty in North America* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre), p. 404. Although most historical data in this paper is found in this publication, other references are added to provide more details.

² Grant, *Polar Imperative*, pp. 10–4.

³ Grant, *Polar Imperative*, pp. 5–9.

⁴ B. J. Theutenberg (1984) ‘Mare Clausum et Mare Liberum’, *Arctic*, 37:4, 481–3.

⁵ Grant, *Polar Imperative*, pp. 11–4; for more detailed information, see M. Byers (2013) *International Law and the Arctic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); and D. R. Rothwell (1996) *The Polar Regions and the Development of International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

⁶ Grant, *Polar Imperative*, pp. 15–7; T. Berger (1991) *A Long and Terrible Shadow: White Values, Native Rights in the Americas, 1492–1992* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre), pp. 1–15.

⁷ Grant, *Polar Imperative*, pp. 30–40; see also R. McGhee (2005) *The Last Imaginary Place: A Human History of the Arctic World* (Toronto: Key Porter); and P. Schledermann (1996) *Crossroads to Greenland: 3000 Years of Prehistory in the Eastern High Arctic* (Calgary: Arctic Institute of North America).

⁸ Grant, *Polar Imperative*, pp. 40–51. For more details about the Norse settlements, see F. Gadd (1970) *The History of Greenland*, vol. 1, *Earliest Times to 1700* (London: C. Hurst and Company); K. Seaver (1996) *The Frozen Echo: Greenland and the Exploration of North America ca. A.D. 1000–1500* (Stanford: Stanford University Press); G. Sigurdsson (2000) *Vikings in the New World* (Reykjavík: Culture House); and a somewhat controversial interpretation by J. Diamond (2005) *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* (Toronto: Penguin Books), pp. 211–77.

⁹ Story by a Greenland Inuk appears in H. Egede Saabye (2009) *Journal in Greenland 1770–1778* (Hanover, NH: IPI Press), p. 49; also quoted in Grant, *Polar Imperative*, pp. 51–2.

¹⁰ Grant, *Polar Imperative*, pp. 59–81 and 86–91.

¹¹ Grant, *Polar Imperative*, pp. 81-6, 148-52, and 181; see also L. Bobé (1953) *Hans Egede: Colonizer and Missionary of Greenland* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger); Gadd, *History of Greenland*, vol. 1-2.

¹² S. Haycox (2006) *Alaska: An American Colony* (Seattle: University of Washington Press), pp. 177-87.

¹³ Grant, *Polar Imperative*, pp. 86-91 and 118-23; P. A. Tikhmenev (1978) *A History of the Russian-American Company* (Seattle: University of Washington Press).

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¹⁸ Grant, *Polar Imperative*, pp. 168-73.

¹⁹ Discussion of Canada's annexation of Rupert's Land, the British transfer of the Arctic Islands, and Canada's actions to secure permanent title to the Arctic Islands is based primarily on archival research as cited in Grant, *Polar Imperative*, pp. 175-246. Additional sources are noted below.

²⁰ Grant, *Polar Imperative*, pp. 178-9 and 344; also John Bockstoe (1986) *Whales, Ice, and Men: The History of Whaling in the Western Arctic* (Seattle: University of Washington Press), pp. 256-89.

²¹ Grant, *Polar Imperative*, pp. 200-7; Library and Archives Canada, RG 15, vol. 1, file 'Arctic Islands', contains a copy of W. F. King (1905) *Report upon the Title of Canada to the Islands to the North of Mainland Canada* (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau).

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²³ T. Flanagan (2013) 'Arctic Symbolism, Harper Stagecraft', *Globe and Mail* (August 21). Based on his experience as Conservative campaign manager in the 2006 election, Flanagan describes how ambitious military spending to protect

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³⁰ As confirmed in S. W. Boggs (1933) *The Polar Regions: Geographical and Historical Data for Consideration in a Study of Claims to Sovereignty in the Arctic and Antarctic Regions*, 1990 edition (Buffalo, NY: William S. Hein & Company), pp. 46-7. Boggs was an official in the geographical division of the State Department.

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⁴¹ Grant, *Polar Imperative*, pp. 379-80; for a summary of the American perspective, see C. E. Donovan (2004) 'The Law of the Sea Treaty', Web Memo #470, The Heritage Foundation (2 April), <http://www.heritage.org>; an official Canadian summary is provided by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (2013) 'Canada's Ocean Estate, a Description of Canada's Maritime Zones', <http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/oceans/marinezones>.

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⁴⁶ M. Adomanis (2012) 'Russia and Norway's Increasing Cooperation in the Arctic', *Forbes* (5 May), <http://www.forbes.com/sites/markadomanis/2012/05/05/russia-and-norways-increasing-cooperation-in-the-arctic/>.

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⁵³ Fridtjof Nansen Quotations,

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Northern Nationalisms, Arctic Mythologies, and the Weight of History

Selected Writings by Shelagh Grant

An eminent historian on the Canadian North and Arctic, Shelagh Grant (1938-2020) taught history and Canadian Studies at Trent University for seventeen years. Her myriad contributions to scholarship on Northern Canada include acclaimed books, such as *Sovereignty or Security? Government Policy in the Canadian North, 1939-1950* (1988), *Arctic Justice: On Trial for Murder - Pond Inlet, 1923* (2002), and *Polar Imperative: A History of Arctic Sovereignty in North America* (2010). Equally important are her many articles and book chapters on historiography and Northern identities, government practices, and the interplay between sovereignty and nationalism, as well as written narratives and oral traditions. This volume of selected writings by Grant celebrates her many contributions to scholarship, reflecting her passion for evidence-based analysis and debate, commitment to social justice, and her dedicated efforts to promote awareness and understanding about the Arctic and Canada's responsibilities therein.

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