

Culture



Y. Georg LITHMAN, Rick R. RIEWE, Raymond E. WIEST and Robert E. WRIGLEY (Eds), *People and Land in Northern Manitoba*, University of Manitoba Anthropology Papers 32, Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, Department of Anthropology, 1992; 270 pages (paper) / Rick RIEWE and Jill OAKES (Eds), *Human Ecology: Issues in the North*, Occasional Publication Series No. 30, Canadian Circumpolar Institute, Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1992; 135 pages (paper)

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sharp relief in the final paper of the book. Doug Daniels and his Cree teacher trainees produced a tongue-in-cheek view of the intelligence test, entitled the "James Smith Reserve Cree Counterbalance I.Q. Test". It is a salutary lesson that reminds us that even under strong duress and depressing conditions the Native person can still laugh at the earnestness with which some of the more ridiculously unsuitable non-Native policies continue to be offered aboriginal peoples for their "betterment".

If succeeding volumes in this series maintain the standard set by this one students will have an extremely useful and comprehensive background of what is going on in the aboriginal world today.

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Rick RIEWE and Jill OAKES (Eds), *Human Ecology: Issues in the North*, Occasional Publication Series No. 30, Canadian Circumpolar Institute, Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1992; 135 pages (paper).

By Peter Douglas Elias
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The first book contains 25 papers from the proceedings of a conference held in Winnipeg, Manitoba, in May of 1990 on the theme of contemporary issues in northern Manitoba. The participants represented interests that traditionally have competed for land, resources, influence and public attention in the north, and one might expect this volume to reveal sources and sentiments of conflict. In fact, what is more striking is the extent of agreement, although at least two main players in the affairs of northern Manitoba are not represented in this volume — the government of Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro. Several papers contain quite pointed criticism of Manitoba Hydro's role in the north. Perhaps conflict would have been more apparent had the volume included the words of Premier Gary Filmon and Manitoba Hydro's representative.

This volume contains interesting examples of how players in Canada's north have begun to reassess their views of vital issues and to bring their thinking and their actions into line with contemporary reality. On some issues, for example, Phil Fontaine of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, and Oscar Lathlin, then Chief of the Pas Band and now Member of the Manitoba Legislature, seem to be in agreement with spokespersons representing northern Manitoba's major industrial entities including Paul Richards of Repap Manitoba and Alastair Walker of Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting. For the two chiefs, the north is no longer home to sparse and remote populations who mostly want to preserve lands and resources for hunters and gatherers. For the two industrialists, the north is no longer a warehouse of riches for the taking nor an endless sink for waste. All seem to be seeking new opportunities and accepting new responsibilities in the north, and gradually policy positions are changing and merging. The article by Chief Harvey Nepinak of the Waterhen Band in Manitoba and Harvey Payne of the Manitoba Department of Natural Resources is an excellent description of a pioneer experiment in wildlife co-management and serves as an example of how competing interests can each serve their purposes through institutionalized mechanisms for sharing environmental opportunities and responsibilities.

This volume suffers a flaw often found in volumes reporting conference proceedings. Each contribution is only a few pages long and can be read out loud in about 20 minutes. Most are quite general and some are superficial, but others are so tightly focused that considerable knowledge must be in hand for the reader to appreciate what is being said. For example, William O. Pruitt, Jr. sets out a radical agenda for environmental protection, but in a few pages he cannot fully develop the linkages between observable environmental problems and the solutions he proposes. Pruitt's dozen pages in this volume contain the distilled essence of a long and distinguished career in the biological sciences. Scholars familiar with his contributions to northern knowledge are aware that Pruitt can mount a formidable and even convincing defense of his ideas, but this is not apparent in his few pages. For similar reasons, academic papers by John Loxley, Jean Friesen, Gerald Friesen, George Churchman and Paul Chartrand, all of the University of Manitoba, fail to adequately represent the state of knowledge in their disciplines.

The second book, edited by Riewe and Oakes, contains 11 contributions by writers representing a variety of disciplines and interests in northern affairs. The preface implies that each paper was first delivered as a lecture at the University of Alberta in 1991, but three are reprints of earlier publications. Unfortunately, these were the only three accompanied by abstracts which hints that the book was hastily assembled without any real attempt at integration. The skimpy one-third page preface to the volume does not notify the reader that *Human Ecology* especially refers to the field of home economics, so some readers might be surprised to see lengthy articles dealing with nutrition, northern housing, and bird skin clothing. Then, the concept of ecology also covers articles on child abuse, spirituality, education, and international affairs. Clearly, the editors intend a very broad definition of ecology, but that definition is rather obscure.

Nevertheless, the book contains some very interesting papers that can be judged on their own merits. Jane Ash Poitras gives us a particularly well-spoken cultural model of history and change in the north. Her model assumes that social problems experienced by aboriginal people are the consequence of spiritual conflict and destruction attending the penetration of aboriginal communities by Canadian culture. The key to development, according to Ash Poitras' model, lies in revitalized traditions, especially spiritual traditions. Her article is a counterpoise for Rosemarie Kuptana's more technical description of child abuse and prevention programs in Inuit communities, and Catherine Twinn and Dexter Dombro's piece on sexual abuse and the criminal justice system. Together, these three articles work well in describing aspects of a particularly pernicious form of human tragedy. They also represent how many aboriginal communities have approached ridding their communities of social pathologies — by strengthening cultural integrity, by more sympathetic program intervention, and by more effective use of the law.

Similarly, papers by Eleanor Wein, Jean Sabry and Frederick Evers, David Young and Elizabeth Olsen, and Milton Freeman can be viewed as complimentary discussions of the impact of economic change on dietary customs. The remaining articles are more difficult to place in an integrated context. Bryce Larke of the University of Alberta has contributed a case study of his efforts to conduct program-oriented research into hepatitis B in Baffin Island communities. Even seasoned researchers in other

fields of northern research will be awed by the mountains of constraint Larke had to overcome to get his work done. Carol Morgraine of the University of Alberta and Rick Riewe of the University of Manitoba provide academic papers summarizing recent events from their perspective as human ecologist and zoologist, respectively.

To fully appreciate all that is offered in these two volumes, readers will need wide-ranging interests and interdisciplinary skills. Since, in my experience, this will be no problem for northerners, both books should get a wide reading.

Elizabeth FURNISS, *Victims of Benevolence: Discipline And Death At The Williams Lake Indian Residential School, 1891 - 1920*, Williams Lake, B.C.: Cariboo Tribal Council, 1992; 53 pages.

Joy MANNETTE (ed), *Elusive Justice: Beyond the Marshall Inquiry*, Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1992; 108 pages.

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While Canada is not alone in its record of the adversity which confronts indigenous peoples before the law, that there should be cause to produce a text such as the one edited by Mannette is, in itself, an indictment of the criminal justice system in that country. And the discussion of physical and emotional abuse of Native pupils at the Williams Lake Mission School which has been undertaken by Furniss (an historical exposé made all the more relevant by recent successful legal action against staff at the same school) is a timely reminder of the ways in which, throughout history, the forces of colonialism have continued to reinforce the powerful/powerless dichotomy which underpins the relationship between invader and invaded.

In many ways the subject matter of the first text, *Victims of Benevolence: Discipline and Death At The Williams Lake Indian Residential School, 1891 - 1920*, informs the content of the second text under review — *Elusive Justice: Beyond the Marshall Inquiry* and even if it were solely for this reason, both are important