

territorial council became an elected assembly, the way the executive council evolved from the elected assembly, and the way the Commissioner's role gradually became similar to that of a provincial lieutenant governor, are almost unique stories embellished by the author's personal anecdotes. It is a very different story, and a very different process, from the way the Alberta and Saskatchewan governments evolved in the old Northwest Territories, and the way the Yukon government has evolved today.

One cannot help but wonder how John Parker feels about the model of responsible government established in the Northwest Territories, and its capacity to deal with the significant problems facing Northerners. But that would probably be another book in itself. That question, however, does not detract from the fact that this volume is one of the core books that enable us to better understand a large chunk of our federation.

Mark O. Dickerson
Department of Political Science
University of Calgary
2500 University Drive N.W.
Calgary, Alberta, Canada
T2N 1N4

TAKEN TO EXTREMES: EDUCATION IN THE FAR NORTH. By FRANK DARNELL and ANTON HOËM. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1996. 299 p., b&w. illus., maps. Hardbound. Kr 260.00; US\$39.90; £27.50 + s&h.

In their analysis of formal education's thrusts northward into indigenous communities, the co-authors of *Taken to Extremes* cover a lot of ground. Their geographic sweep embraces more than half the circumpolar regions of the world, from the Saami lands of northern Scandinavia, westward through Greenland and northern Canada, to Central and Siberian Yup'ik and Aleut communities in western Alaska (Map 1, p. 9). In these east-west comparisons, culture by culture, the book takes a geographic orientation at right angles to the alignment of most political boundaries. By cutting across the dominant south-to-north information flow that we routinely take for granted, Darnell and Hoëm align their analysis and experiences in an unusual and instructive way.

Equally ambitious is their historic sweep: it reaches back four centuries to when attempts at Western schooling were timidly introduced into the Saami homelands in 1596, and located at Lycksele in 1632 by the Swedish Crown and church. The gradual accommodation by both sides in these cross-cultural encounters has progressed in a similar series of stages, whether these were paced over four centuries, as in the case of the Saami, over three centuries for some Greenlandic Inuit experiences, or compressed into the last four decades, as in some central and eastern Canadian Inuit societies. Their analyses lead Darnell and Hoëm to see grounds for both hope and concern. This is the kind of good news/bad news dilemma that holds readers' attention; it also promotes readers'

empathy for similarities in challenges faced by distant school systems, communities, and individual educators.

The authors' account and conclusions are nontechnical, as they avoid statistics in favour of sharing a reflective overview. From parallels in their careers and experiences in education in North America and Scandinavia, Darnell and Hoëm construct a narrative that works well, although their text is not always seamlessly or flawlessly edited. Thus, readers should be alert to a few passages in which a word replacement would convert the passage from puzzling to meaningful (e.g., p. 274, "...aspersions of parents..." should read, "...aspirations of parents..."; and p. 279, "...sure way to deprive this approach..." should read, "...sure way to derive this approach...").

Practising educators in the Far North may be relieved to learn that fellow travelers exist. Throughout history, along the book's east-west axis of coverage, colleagues have encountered dissonances between immigrant Western education and local indigenous cultures. While there have been substantial gains in local self-determination within communities, boards of education, and individual schools, these gains sometimes come at high cost to educators willing to stake their careers on cross-cultural initiatives. Aside from the universally essential ingredient of mutual respect across cultures, no single factor, or magic-bullet explanations (e.g., bilingualism) for the success or failure of northern learning enterprises are offered. Darnell and Hoëm focus instead on broad institutional and historical differences between Western schooling and the cultural transmission practised by local or regional indigenous traditions.

The civility that the authors bring to sometimes hotly contested topics is exemplified in several ways. First is the book's *Foreword* by Dennis Demmert, a Tlingit educator raised on Alaska's Prince of Wales Island. The authors' use of extensive quotations from other indigenous authors and commentators stems from genuine respect, notably for Greenland's Ingmar Egede, the Saami educator Jan Henry Keskitalo, and Alaska's Oscar Kawagley. Another gesture of civility is their discussion of Paul Robinson's career in Canada's Northwest Territories. Robinson's service as the N.W.T.'s Chief of Curriculum Services, 1969–74, was shortened by his challenging the traditional educational establishment of those days. Robinson's curriculum designs are vindicated here, as being open-ended and flexible, culturally sensitive, and decades ahead of their time.

The authors predict that Canada's soon-to-be-launched territory, Nunavut, will showcase adaptive harmony by adopting modified Western schooling in the Far North. If their optimism for Nunavut schooling seems surprising in view of the recency of the eastern Arctic's entry into cross-cultural education, readers should judge for themselves the proposed four developmental stages that the authors distill from experiences within their book's geographic and historic reach: 1) conformity to Western norms (contact to late 1950s); 2) growing dissatisfaction (late 1950s to mid-1960s); sustained assertiveness (mid-1960s to mid- or late 1970s); and 4) Native self-determination (mid-1970s to present).

Universities, for example, have played especially prominent roles in the pivotal third stage common to indigenous educational empowerment. Five universities collectively influenced events throughout the geographic scope of the book so that all nativistic movements were largely synchronous by 1970. Dominant ideologies in the 1960s were assimilationist, manifested as the “global village” or mainstreaming paradigm behind civil rights movements for minorities. The authors were directly involved and mutually acquainted through two of those universities after that hectic decade. Their experience provided them with insights into how this paradigm sharpened the debates between advocates for local cultural continuity and advocates for cultural replacement in the Far North. In turn, these debates set the stage for northern education in today’s slower-paced and more heterogeneous fourth stage.

Northern educators currently find themselves working politically to attain “cultural synthesis,” according to Darnell and Hoëm’s overview. Their assessment at first sounds reassuring, as if educators were closing in on harmonious achievements in the circumpolar North. In reality, however, unique high-latitude difficulties and various external circumstances are retarding many developments in cultural synthesis. In the past three decades, the very synchrony with which their fourth stage began everywhere at once seems to have been replaced by regionally different cadences or rates of achieving degrees of autonomy in education.

One section of their book (p. 138–148) rises to indignation on the matter of difficulties. Darnell and Hoëm elsewhere maintain a descriptive or gently prescriptive tone, but here they deplore vestiges of colonial organization that remain entrenched in the Far North. The “factory” model of schooling especially ill-fits indigenous cultures. Its roots persist, from early missionary and colonizing strategies by church and nation-state right into the fourth stage, or today’s activism. Darnell and Hoëm outline how stifling this model is to local levels of educational enterprise:

This system, with its pyramidal tiers of authority, often described as the ‘factory’ or ‘top-down’ model of school organization, is based on the concept that authority and decisions flow downward from the top. Authority to make policy originates with legislative bodies and ministries, passes through middle management and supervisors (superintendents and principals) with the advice of educational specialists, and only then finally to classroom teachers. At the lowest level, the base of the pyramid, where teachers and students come in contact with the system and each other, little is left to be decided. (p. 139)

Entrenched rigidity is first portrayed as baffling:

In the light of what we now know about indigenous societies, it is remarkable that some school officials continue to persist in defending policies that confer so much authority in bodies located at great distances from the operational level. The result of this arrangement is that

those with the least authority have the greatest day-to-day exposure to and comprehension of the problems of schooling, while those with the greatest authority are the farthest removed from the scene of the problems. (p. 141)

The base of this authority structure recalls the paralysis of teacher-student interactions that Tobias (1992:16) saw in scientific curricular reform, and which she aptly termed “teacher-proofing.” For their part, indigenous educators like Kawagley and Keskitalo are credited with recognizing the need to reorganize educational delivery in the Far North around the sanctity of teacher-student exchanges—as have educational theorists and reformers elsewhere, like Sizer, Murphy, and the Quality Education for Minorities Project based at MIT. Ultimately the failure of indigenous northern communities to accomplish more widespread educational devolution is forgiven as “...not surprising, given that the factory model of schooling is the only one to which they have been exposed” (p. 146).

Further to characterize *Taken to Extremes*, educators are cautioned not to expect this overview to prescribe detailed solutions for particular communities in the circumpolar North. From living in one of the larger indigenous settlements within the scope of the book, for example, I see obstacles to devolution missed by the book’s global perspective. One such up-close obstacle is diversity of opinion—to the point of factionalism—within a society. Darnell and Hoëm tacitly regard indigenous societies as internally homogeneous, that is, capable of asserting a unity of voice when striving for local educational goals and local empowerment. Perhaps their view is generally accurate, but there are exceptions to this image of unanimity. The top-down factory model discussed above may actually owe its persistence in some communities to its restraint of factionalism. Authoritarian hierarchies, after all, enjoy a reputation for efficiently controlling internal dissent.

Another northern challenge, unforeseen by this largely retrospective analysis, could be associated with shrinking public funding for education. Educators at lower latitudes have raised alarm over the fiscal trends that have invited corporate (i.e., non-public) entities to invade traditionally public spheres of education. As a result of these intrusions, decisions on curriculum content may be shaped by distantly conceived agendas that are neither publicly discussed nor in the public interest of a particular community (Barlow and Robertson, 1994). So-called “privatization,” if it connotes a utilitarian emphasis on students’ skills for the global workplace, could become a potent ally of the factory model for school organization. If this alliance sounds fanciful, consider the current balance in any particular northern school system between distantly packaged resources (from textbooks to multimedia and Internet instructional support), on the one hand, and locally fashioned and adapted learning resources, on the other. A system’s infatuation with importing slick and conveniently packaged instructional materials may signal the need for northern citizens and educators to take a closer look.

These cautions notwithstanding, *Taken to Extremes* provides friends of education in the Far North with singularly valuable background and perspectives to inspire thoughtful action, including educational research. Northern educational achievement, still confounded by two universally vexing problems, low performance and low self-image among students, needs all the thoughtful and active friends it can muster.

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David W. Norton
Barrow Arctic Science Consortium
P.O. Box 577
Barrow, Alaska, U.S.A.
99723

NORTHERN PEOPLE, SOUTHERN STATES: MAINTAINING ETHNICITIES IN THE CIRCUMPOLAR WORLD. Edited by ROBERT P. WHEELERSBURG. Umeå, Sweden: CERUM, 1996. viii + 211 p., maps. Softbound. No price indicated.

The title *Northern People, Southern States: Maintaining Ethnicities in the Circumpolar World* generates several expectations. It conjures up conflicting images of the hinterland and the homeland: what may be a hinterland for resource exploitation to southern states is a homeland to people who live there. It implies that the ideals and concerns of northern peoples will come through the varied essays included in this collection. It suggests that a multidisciplinary approach will be inherent in the analysis. Finally, the title indicates that the book is about circumpolar communities, and implies that the cases studied will reflect the rich cultural diversity of circumpolar peoples.

The collection of essays in *Northern People, Southern States* was edited by Robert Wheelersburg, who also contributed to one of the essays. His well-written and thought-provoking introduction provides context to the diverse topics presented in the essays. Its first sentence states the intention of the collection: "The theme of this book is the cultural legacy of the circumpolar region." The reader, who is assumed to be a social scientist or humanist, is urged to "understand socio-economic change in the North by examining the history, local knowledge and values of people living there" (p. 1). These laudable aims also raise the expectations with which one approaches the text.

The reader gets a strong sense that the authors recognize and are sensitive to the fact that each geographic region dealt with is a homeland to a people. For instance, this ideal is passionately conveyed in Sarah Carter's reprinted essay on the Plains Cree in the Canadian West (Carter, 1995). As a group, the essays reflect multidisciplinary. They present research on the survival of language use, religious exchange, historical taxation and census records, epidemics, theories on the origins of pastoralism, the search for cultural identity, and contemporary issues related to reindeer herding and natural resource competition. Individually, however, these essays demonstrate varying degrees of familiarity with interdisciplinary analysis on the respective issues being investigated. For instance, the paper on "The Future of Saami Minority Language Survival in Circumpolar Scandinavia," by Mikael Svonni, was enhanced through an interdisciplinary approach because the discussion went beyond linguistic usage to include the impact of communications technology such as the television and print media. As a result, wider issues associated with the cultural fabric of the community could be considered. However, the essay entitled "Northern People, Southern Records: The Yamal Nenets in Russian Population Counts, 1695–1989," by Igor Krupnik—although interesting—fails to address in a meaningful manner the issue of northern people and southern states. It does not consider the data critically in terms of the social, political, and economic motivations of the state.

One cannot help but conclude from the varying degrees of interdisciplinarity applied in these essays that an independent peer review of each essay might have qualitatively strengthened the collection. For example, the essay "Natural Resource Competition in the Swedish Reindeer Herding Region," by Lennart Bäck, combines discussion on various disciplines and talks of the merit of technologies such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS). It also draws on ideas from the dependency theory of development and engages in a discussion on the relationship between the centre and periphery. Yet the discussion is superficial and seems hurried, possibly because the author seems unaware of sources that would have greatly improved the analysis. Here an independent peer review would have helped improve the ideas presented because this shortcoming would have been revealed prior to publication. However, the essay remains committed to history as it stands—with some weaknesses.

The title *Northern People, Southern States* suggests that the essays will deal with a wide variety of circumpolar peoples. However, the majority of the essays limit themselves to the Saami. In particular, the majority of the essays deal with the Saami living within Fenno-Scandinavia, particularly Sweden, and therefore do not include a detailed discussion of the Saami living on the Kola Peninsula in Russia. Thus the essays do not deal directly with the experience of maintaining ethnicities "in the circumpolar world," as the subtitle suggests, but rather in only a small portion of that world. Nonetheless, what is presented is informative and useful to a social scientist or humanist because it represents the current state of research and scholarship being undertaken