

FINDING THE ARCTIC: HISTORY AND CULTURE ALONG A 2,500-MILE SNOWMOBILE JOURNEY FROM ALASKA TO HUDSON'S BAY. By MATTHEW STURM. Fairbanks, Alaska: University of Alaska Press, 2012. ISBN 978-1-60223-163-4. 320 p., 14 maps, 193 colour plates, recommended readings, index. Softcover. US \$24.95.

In *Finding the Arctic*, Matthew Sturm documents a 2500-mile snowmobile trip he and six colleagues embarked on in the winter of 2007. As part of his long quest to “find the Arctic and his place in it,” Sturm has enthusiastically brought together a charming book that is entertaining and aesthetically pleasing to the reader. Sturm and his cohort chase stories of famed Arctic explorers and settlers across the top of North America from Fairbanks, Alaska, to Baker Lake, Nunavut, in an effort to connect to the history of this region, where all have conducted research. Sturm states that the idea for the expedition “came from our shared desire to travel through the Arctic doing more than just measuring snow” (p. 4), but it quickly becomes apparent to the reader that it was also stimulated by a romantic desire to pay direct homage to the sites and journeys of past settlers and Euro-American explorers. Sturm is quick to note (p. 1) the romanticism inherent in his team’s pilgrimage: “We thought our expedition would be about finding The Soul of the Arctic. What hubris! We should have known that it would end up being about practical things.”

The book is a patchwork of contemporary stories, explorations of historical sites and events, and plain-language descriptions of fauna and geography, and it includes a beautiful collection of archival images. The objective of the book is to bring together compelling stories of exploration and human-nature encounters throughout the North and to document them alongside the 2500-mile snowmobile journey taken by Sturm and his colleagues. Sturm does an excellent job of weaving these stories together: he writes with an honest and playful voice, interlacing humorous incidents on the trail with personal stories of his own research and experiences in the Arctic. The summaries that begin each chapter add a nice touch and tease the reader with what is to come. The list of recommended readings at the end of the book will undoubtedly prove helpful to students or others interested in learning more about early explorers.

This book would have benefited from an exploration of the material available on indigenous people living in the region. In this vein, it follows the footsteps of other “histories” that deal almost solely with the activities of Westerners in the North rather than delving into the significant history of local indigenous residents. While it is evident that Sturm makes an active effort to include indigenous peoples in his narrative, he often misses opportunities to point out indigenous activities or stories that are equally as poignant as those of Sir John Franklin or John Hornby. For example, when the team is beginning to traverse the Richardson Mountains across the Yukon-Northwest Territories border and into the Mackenzie Basin, Sturm mentions only

briefly that the Vuntut Gwitchin (and other First Nations, I might add) have been crossing the mountains for 7000 years before he launches into a much longer consideration of the famous, and already well-explored, story of the Mad Trapper (p. 55). Another lost opportunity was the discussion of Bear Rock. Sturm (p. 87) notes in passing that Bear Rock “is a sacred place to the Sahtu,” and immediately moves on to an account of Alexander Mackenzie’s journey up the Mackenzie River. Bear Rock is the site of an important Dene story in which the ancestor Yamoria slays two giant beavers. It is a place of great collective historical and spiritual significance and warrants much further attention.

From an anthropological perspective, the author’s discussion of the impact of missionaries and Christianity in the North needs to be dealt with critically. In an effort to put his discomfort with missionary expansion in the North into perspective, Sturm (p. 133) writes that:

Ethnologists such as Knud Rasmussen and Diamond Jenness have vividly described how, prior to Western contact, the Inuit and Iñupiat were shackled by a system of superstitions largely based on fear. Because starvation, injury, and death were always just around the corner in their lives, Native cultures had developed elaborate but ineffectual systems of charms and talismans designed to ward off harms. A dark and frightening internal spiritual world had been created as a fitting counterpart to the physical world of privation and violence in which they had to live. Who was I to judge whether the arrival of Christianity was negative or positive?

First, anthropologists have long pointed out the ethnocentrism that can be found in much of the early ethnological materials available on indigenous peoples in the Americas. The colonial powers that funded the collection of most of this material, and even some of the ethnologists or missionaries who collected it, operated under an assumption that indigenous peoples were less socially and culturally evolved than Europeans (a type of social Darwinism), a reprehensible theory that has long been disproven. This type of perspective is responsible for discriminatory policies that subjugated indigenous peoples for centuries and that continue to harm communities and individuals today. Furthermore, indigenous spiritual systems and indigenous medicine are a great deal more complex than “charms and talismans,” and this complexity should be addressed or explored before they are tossed aside as “superstitions.” Finally, throughout the book the author continuously misspells the name of the hamlet of Tulita as “Telida,” despite the fact the author and publisher had to have received permission from the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre to use archival photos that are catalogued and labeled with the correct spelling. It is a very vexing error for readers who are familiar with the region and one that could have easily been rectified by thorough fact-checking. A list of the official community names and proper spelling of the Northwest

Territories is available from the Government of the Northwest Territories.

In sum, *Finding the Arctic* provides a good basic survey of the history of Arctic exploration and some of the better-known early Euro-American settlers. However, at its base, it is a story about friends united by their mutual love for science and the Arctic. The camaraderie between the men is charming, and while it is at times reminiscent of an old boys' club catching up over a brew post-conference, this is part of its allure. I would recommend this book as reading material for an introductory class on North American Arctic history or to junior scholars for pleasure. The price is reasonable given the quality of the images and maps included in the text and the range of material that it covers. It would make a welcome addition to the libraries of both academics and non-academics interested in the North.

Morgan E. Moffitt
Department of Anthropology
University of Alberta
13-15 HM Tory Bldg
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2H4, Canada
moffitt@ualberta.ca

NORTH BY 2020: PERSPECTIVES ON ALASKA'S CHANGING SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS.

Edited By AMY LAUREN LOVECRAFT and HAJO EICKEN. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2011. Distributed by University of Chicago Press. ISBN 978-1-60223-142-9. xvi + 736 p., maps, colour illus., index of authors, index. 55 contributions in 9 sections. Softbound. US\$70.00.

Ambitious by any measure, this book sprouted from studies in Alaska during the 4th International Polar Year (IPY) of 2007–09. It was further refined and amplified by contributions supported by the University of Alaska-based outreach forum entitled “North by 2020” (p. xii). In all, 92 individuals contributed to one or more of its 57 chapters. The collection, divided into nine thematic sections, embraces academic disciplines from natural and social sciences to art and music and fosters trans-disciplinary dialogues. It also attracted a wide spectrum of agency, community, and industry contributors from outside academia.

Events and trends during the 50 years between the 3rd IPY (International Geophysical Year) of 1957–58 and the 4th IPY affected Alaska profoundly. Examples of structural, or “game-changing” developments illustrate this point: Alaska Statehood (1959); discovery of the Prudhoe Bay oilfield (1968); numerous acts of U.S. federal legislation (1968–76) affecting environmental and sociocultural policies (e.g., the Alaska Native Land Claims Settlement Act of 1971); growing awareness of global climate change and holistic, or trans-disciplinary, scholarship (1980 onward); the end of the Cold War (1988–92); and the growing

emphasis on Traditional Ecological Knowledge (mid-1990s onward). How accurately the book's contents portray the state of scholarly and public policy discourse underway in the Alaska sector of the circumpolar North becomes the primary assessment of the book's success. This reviewer's first-level judgment is that the book succeeds. It captures the state of the art in the rapidly developing trans-disciplinary enterprise of understanding, interpreting, and identifying adaptive options for social-ecological systems at Alaska's high latitudes.

Healthy candor weaves through and unites the book's diverse nine sections. Carefully reading Haley et al.'s chapter (6.6) proved pivotal to my own grasp of how this whole collection connects that candor with the book's thematic threads. Haley et al. articulate those connections in a manner that resonates with my own experiences and places a deeper critical assessment of the book's significance within my modest reach. Its title (“Strengthening Institutions...”) reflects its prescriptive tone. Its quotation of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Administrator Lubchenco, who in 2009 called U.S. management of ocean resources “ad hoc and fragmented” (p. 457), exemplifies the book's many thoughtful explorations of tough problems yet to be resolved. Meek's chapter (5.4) likewise examines historical developments leading to modern policies in marine mammal management. Carothers' chapter (5.5) is both candid and moving in its portrayal of the disenfranchisement of subsistence fishers and their culture of sufficiency through legislation that privatized rights to exploit salmon resources (“limited entry”). This “commodification” stems from both the Magnuson-Stevens Act of 1976 (including its reauthorizations and amendments) and amendments to Alaska's State Constitution (p. 379–380). The U.S. Coast Guard's preparedness to carry out its mandates in Arctic waters is cheerfully and candidly scrutinized by Ragone (6.2).

Not many readers will find the time to read and annotate this book from cover to cover, then revisit marginal notes and underlined passages. Having done so, however, allows me to assure others that the overview of the whole volume (Lovecraft and Eicken, chapter 1.2) accurately identifies goals the editors pursued, and suggests how their long-term success could eventually be judged. Annotating also made me appreciate the unexpected “gems” of both new and older wisdom assembled in this collection. One new gem (Leigh et al., chapter 2.9) outlines components of a curricular experiment by educators and performing artists at an urban Alaska charter school, where 90% of the students are Native Alaskans in middle-school grades. Their course unites science and creative expression within the theme of climate change. Another gem is Kamerling's chapter (8.8) on collaborative ethnographic filmmaking. This author develops and illustrates perspectives on work that he and colleagues completed 35 or more years earlier: “...a film's authenticity can only be judged by how it is used over time” (p. 675).