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'Take it from the top': northern conceptions about identity in the western Arctic and beyond

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ABSTRACT. During the last decades the Arctic has become more central on the world stage. However, despite increased interest how much do people really know about 'the north' and the 'northern people'? The aim of this article is to chronicle a research project by students, who saw themselves as northerners, that used video to capture northerners' definitions of the north, as well as asking the community about what they wanted newcomers and southern Canada to know about the north. The group also embarked on a new discipline of northerners studying 'the south'. 43 students interviewed 95 people in the Beaufort Delta, Northwest Territories and 25 people in Edmonton, Alberta. The student researchers' responses and that of their interviewees are some of the most direct messages on how northerners view their identity and that of their fellow southern Canadians. This project created a video tool to share, educate, and commence a dialogue between people about the north straight from the source.

Introduction and background

The Arctic is a key part of the Canadian identity. If you visit Canada House in London you will see Inuit art immediately upon entry and northern exhibitions are often advertised on banners with 'northern' and Arctic images before you cross the threshold. Northern imagery is very much a part of how Canada promotes itself on the international stage. The recent Vancouver Winter Olympics' logo was an Inukshuk, a high Arctic symbolic land marker made out of piled stones often in a body shape, which was named 'Ilanaak' meaning 'friend' in the eastern Arctic dialect of Inuktitut. This is a powerful example of the Canadian use of the 'north'. It was a curious choice due to a strong local indigenous community and history in British Columbia with its own symbols like the equally iconic totem poles. There was quiet criticism of the choice but it was defended as a national symbol. Indeed, the federal government is currently going through a studied process to quantify the value of the polar bear as a Canadian icon. The Arctic is not only central to Canada's conception and marketing of itself but it is also resource rich, geographically immense, key to national sovereignty and international security. However, the Arctic is first a homeland and these images strategically used by the government are cultural in history and meaning.

The disconnection between the Canadian use of the Arctic and north and the realities and origins of these icons and images is succinctly captured by Inuvialuit leader Nellie Cournoyea:

> When someone says, 'I want to practice my own culture' it doesn't mean going back to freezing in igloos and hunting with bows and arrows. It means regaining the control we had over our own lives before. . .They glamorise and romanticise the Inuit. . .and give us status the others don't have. Canadians like to talk about us eating frozen meat and living in the cold. It gives Canada something other countries don't have. Everyone likes the Inuit (Petrone 1988: 286).

The distance between the Canadian conception of the north and northern peoples' perceptions of themselves and their homeland is as vast as the Arctic landscape. It is fair to hypothesise that international ideas of the Canadian Arctic are just as far off if not more so. The challenge of the northerners' research project detailed

in this article is to try and find ways to begin to come to terms with the expanse. How is that 50,000 Inuit people in a country of 30 million come to be so important to the Canadian brand? Indeed, northern Canada beyond the 60th parallel accounts for 40% of 10 million km^2, but only 0.33% of the national population. There are also more than twenty aboriginal nations including the Inuit in this substantial part of Canada. A pressing question is whether popular representation is an accurate and meaningful representation of the northern people? This special issue focuses on contested identities. The student research team was very emphatic about common perceptions of northerners and northern Canadians that is at best simple and incomplete and at worst incorrect and prejudiced. The most common statement was 'We don't live in igloos'.

The project's title is a grounding point, built on the idea that to know the north you must first ask the north. The north is often known as the 'top of the world' and the title asks the participants and viewers to allow northerners to tell their story and to let them tell it first. Sometimes research needs to go back to the beginning as it has become ahead of itself and in this project we tried to get to the very beginning. This research explores the use of video as a tool to affect a dialogue with northerners in order to understand better their perspectives on the north, northerners, newcomers to the north, and the south. The themes arising from the research provide direction for improving understanding, communication, and research in the north or anywhere educational inequality exists. For this article 'northerner' refers to a resident of the Northwest Territories (NWT), half of whom are aboriginal or indigenous Canadians. 'Southern' refers to southern Canada located to the south of the 60th parallel. The western Arctic, a region of the NWT, is also known as the Beaufort Delta, stretching from the Mackenzie Delta to the Arctic Ocean and reaching into the Arctic archipelago. There are two main indigenous groups in the region, the Inuvialuit, also known as Inuit, and the Gwich'in, a Dene first nation as well as smaller numbers of other aboriginal groups such as the Métis. These comprise approximately 70% of the total population. From the Indian Act (1876) and Treaty 11 (1921) to the first oil and gas boom, the federal government has imposed policies on the north that have directly affected these peoples. Although devolution of power, land claims, and self-government promise change, the standard of living of most northerners is still far below Canadian norms.

This student research is very pressing because education is failing in the Canadian north. The International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (Government of Canada 2003) study confirmed that 69% of aboriginal northerners scored below level 3 (of 5), the level required by most people for day-to-day activities. Conversely, about 70% of non-aboriginal northerners scored at level 3 or higher. The government of the NWT (2005) found in their research that fewer than half of aboriginal students complete high school. In contrast, 87.1% of non-aboriginal students complete high school. Non-aboriginal northerners are far more likely to complete post-secondary education than aboriginal northerners are to complete high school. University graduation rates are 4.6% for aboriginal northerners compared to 27.7% for non-aboriginal northerners. The common argument is that the schools are there so the opportunity is there, but given these statistics it is clear that educational opportunities are not equitable. Many different theories and explanations have been put forward to explain the difference such as the parental attitudes towards education due to the clash between the cultures and residential school trauma but this project was most interested in the process of giving voice to the native people as part of their educational process.

Canada has only recently, in November 2010, joined other counties in ratifying the United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations 2007). However, the Canadian Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms does not include education as a fundamental right.

Education has had a very difficult and often brutal genesis in the north. Education has the power to affect major change. It is the method of transmitting society's values, norms and processes. It has, as is well known, long been the tool of colonialism

The project also attempted to be a process of equality and inclusiveness. When we turn on the television, go to a film or go on-line the images we consume have power. If these images do not look like you or how you live your life the absence has a value. The younger the student on the research team the more concerned they were with being seen as modern and up-to-date and this is reflected in the subjects they each chose for their personal project. In class they often spoke of southerners thinking they were backward and out-of-date. In the digital world northern youth want the rest of the world to know that they are wired in. The desire to be seen as worldly and modern was shared by the older students but expressed in a different way. More often these students would choose more traditional subjects that were closer to home but they were underscored with the notion that 'we know our way and yours'.

As Foucault (2009) and Scott (1998) have examined, the visibility of groups and bodies is a crucial dimension of state control. They propose that the more visible the group the more power they can wield and the less visible have less power. Often, the only visibility afforded northern Canadians is expressed through a few main false manifestations of the romantic, mythic and tragic portrayal of them by government and media. The process of constructing questions and then undertaking interviews allowed the students to begin to engage with what was real to them and what was not; to try and understand the value of both and to try and communicate their views to a wider audience. With video as the method the public nature of the research was intrinsic. The interviews and then edited segments asked the viewer to make their own meaning, exemplifying McLuhan's maxim 'the medium

is the message' (1996: 7). The process was not simplistic but elemental to the control over the power of public identity.

Reclaiming northern and indigenous identity is part of this process of the project of decolonising education. Zebedee Nungak speaks eloquently of his being sent away to the south for education, tragically removing him from his family, community, culture and Arctic environment thus denying him the chance to 'learn to be an Inuk man' and how this relocation prevented him from becoming a fully formed man. In the documentary 'Experimental Eskimos' (2010) that chronicles three men, including Nungak, who had been part of the Canadian government's experiment to remove Inuk children and send them to live with white middle-class families. The experiment was successful in that all three men became great leaders. However, these men fought with the government for the autonomy and self-determination of their people, the Inuit. This was not the outcome the government had intended and the price the boys would pay, as boys becoming men but being removed from their families, communities and culture, would be very steep. Another of the 'experimental' subjects, former MP Peter Ittinuar (2011), was very clear when he stated on-line in his interview with the Canadian Broadcasting Company 'when you've lost your identity, you go through a lot of personal turmoil, and it manifests itself in various ways — perhaps drinking and other behaviours that are not really conducive to a normal, good life'. As an educator, it demonstrates tragically the high stakes and cost of education when it is used as a tool of control rather than of empowerment. If the Beaufort Delta is a confluence of cultures and societies education should be a tool of communion not conflict. Education in the Arctic needs to support and respect northern context, culture and identity. This research project directly engaged with what northerners thought about their identity as northerners and how their north and the south was part of that identity.

In the age of branding and the omnipresent media and new media, the 'public' has new power and importance. Ironically, aboriginal Canadians do not enjoy a positive public image in Canada. Too often the media reports on the salacious social issues and problems of aboriginal Canada. The Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples (1998: 198) quotes Bud White Eye's words: 'many of the myths and misperceptions that persist among non-aboriginal people are perpetuated by no communication, poor communication or one-sided communication. . .'. Despite this lack of communication Canada continues using aboriginal images as an integral part of its branding. Even in film aboriginal peoples too often are depicted through a series of stereotypes. Diamond's documentary 'Real Injun' (2009) looks at how the myth of 'the Injun' has influenced the world's understanding, and misunderstanding, of natives. Our research project concentrates on the public sphere and northern students trying to understand and take control of this image. Indeed, in this digital age taking control of your image is not only vital, but also as coming generations live in a more digitally- and socially-connected way; it is part of how we will build our identity. It is the hope that the hoped for equality of the digital age might assist northerners in showing the world their north.

Northern views on identity

To set the stage first I must introduce myself by way of answering the project's first research question, 'Are you a northerner?', to which the answer is yes and no. I have come to understand that identity is situational, contextual, relative and relational. As seen above, the research project very early tried to come to working definitions of what is north and south. What became very clear is that it is more of a rippling out effect of degrees than a one or the other. I am a northerner because I live in Inuvik, because I have taught there for over ten years and most bizarrely to me because my partner is from Inuvik. I am not a northerner because I am originally from Calgary, have a southern world view (though that is shifting), and I am non-aboriginal.

For another sketch we can look at my partner who is a northerner because he was born, raised and schooled in Inuvik, he went away to university and came back (with me) and has also taught for the last decade. He is not aboriginal, which is a factor, but as one student researcher said 'He is still a northerner but I am just a little bit more of one as an aboriginal'. Our study included messages from northerners to newcomers to the north, northerners to southerners and northerners to northerners.

Methodology

After hundreds of years of being the object of southern research, the voice of northern people needed to be heard not only on the north, but also on the south. The Inuvik Literacy Circle, with Aurora College's Inuvik Learning Centre's staff and students, conducted a three-part research project focusing on 'Northern perspectives'. Building on Zebedee Nungak's (2001) ground-breaking work in *Qallunology*, Rasmussen's (2002) *Qallunology: pedagogy of the oppressor* and Sandiford's (2008) *Quallunaat: why white people are funny* this project was an investigation into northern perceptions of the south, southerners in the north and also the north and the northern land and people. Historically it also builds on Paine's (1977) *White Arctic* and Brody's (1975) *The people's land: Eskimos and whites in the eastern Arctic*. Employing primary research techniques with anthropological and sociological theory, students interviewed each other and community members and ultimately travelled to the south for fieldwork. They drew on the 1920s Vertov (James 1996), Lowe and Snowdon's (1968) Fogo Island and Balikci and Mary-Rousseliere (1968–1969) models of using video as an educational method of dialogue and community development. The project used collaborative research design, interviews, video and reflective

assignments to explore the south and the north. As advocated by Freire (1998), Giroux (1993), Hooks (1989), Linda Smith (1999) and Graham Smith (1993), student researchers used their voices in a project of reclaiming and expanding northerner research and learning from a distinctly and uniquely northern place.

Like the Beaufort Delta, this project is a great confluence. The delta is the confluence of many rivers, the largest being the Mackenzie, coming together and emptying into the Beaufort Sea and Arctic Ocean. This place is a meeting not only of waters but also of people, culture, society, education and circumstance. The delta is the traditional meeting of two ancient cultures, the Gwich'in and the Inuvialuit, but also the meeting place of newcomers to the north from southern Canada. The significance of the many rivers and waterways being part of the large and powerful Mackenzie River demonstrates the interconnectedness and strength of the northern aboriginal cultures, and the Arctic Ocean can be seen to symbolise the larger membership in the family of the human race. This intersection and connection in modern times has not always been familial or equitable but like the Mackenzie Delta these connections are unavoidable.

The basic goal of the research project is to try to stimulate, support and nurture dialogue and understanding in the north but also in the south. As one student (Vera) said early in the research project 'Suzanne we are all one family. My grandmother is white so you are my family and if I don't like you and I don't like myself. We are all one family.' As an educator in the western Arctic it is a reality that most instructors at the secondary and post-secondary level will be from southern Canada but the students will almost all be northerners. This dynamic leads to many communication challenges. As an instructor that teaches composition I have learned that the main challenge that students face in writing is presenting information in a cross-cultural manner. Northern students must not only master writing but also writing for an audience with a fundamentally different world-view, background, culture and context.

'Take it from the top' project progression

Research in the north has had a long history much like education and due to problems, power inequality and poor communication, both have earned a great deal of mistrust. There used to be a joke that a northern family consisted of 'A mother, father, children and a researcher'. Research in the Canadian North is now much more closely monitored and controlled, protecting communities and the Arctic. This protection comes in two phases; the first is an ethical review, and then the second is the scientific research licensing process for the NWT through the Aurora Research Institute. This process was all accomplished before we began but all phases involved intensive student participation and community consultation.

The research was integrated into student course work and during Spring 2008 until Spring 2009 43 students worked in 4 groups to design the research, interview 95 people, edit and create personal projects. All except one of the student researchers were aboriginal. Most were Gwich'in and Inuvialuit but three were Dene from the Sahtu, which is the region directly south of the Beaufort Delta. The students ranged in age from 16–65. Most of the 95 people interviewed were also aboriginal, but 11 were from the south originally and most had lived there for many years. A group of three students, all Inuvialuit, then continued on to work through summer 2009 at paid internships. The funding was made available through government grants. The students edited all the collected interviews into the themed project while continuing personal projects. Funding for equipment and salaries was provided for through grant application from territorial government agencies (Industry, Tourism and Investment, Education Culture and Employment and NWT Arts Council, as well as some non-profit organisations Royal Canadian Legion, Ladies Auxiliary Legion Inuvik Lions Club and the NWT Literacy Council and the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation. Initially, we applied for federal funding for the International Polar Year and the first student team and I worked on that proposal. As it was a very in-depth process I used that proposal work for all other funding requests. We always discussed the funding process but the paperwork and reporting were always my responsibility. The summer was filled with filming at the Great Northern Arts Festival and the Northern Games. The students also travelled to Edmonton to interview 25 people about what they knew about the north and the south. Due to limitations in the sample size, these data are not meant to be statistically significant. However, given that the 95 people interviewed and 43 students involved were from a community of 3500 and region of 7500, it is reasonable to start to draw some conclusions. This is at its heart a qualitative study but it does fulfil the criteria of saturation of contents, that is, the last interviews did not bring in many ideas that had not already been expressed in the preceding ones. Data thus conveyed a relatively exhaustive range of opinions about the three themes: 'northern studies for northerners', 'north to south' and 'southern studies'.

This project was designed, executed and completed by and for northerners. This project sought to engage students on what they thought of the issues and what their community thought. The underlying philosophy of the project is how identity is made, understood and communicated. Almost 50 students took part in this inquiry based research assignment that focused on a community based appreciative enquiry. The project evolved over time and has grown accordingly. Most of the research was a group collaborative process with students and community members; however, the students also were able to pursue individual projects. My responsibilities were evolving from initially leading/mentoring and organising the groups to becoming more and more functionally

administrative and supportive as we progressed into personal projects and theme editing, when students moved into leadership and self-direction.

There were 6 main questions: What does the north mean to you? What does it mean to be a northerner? What advice would you give to newcomers to the north? What do you want the south to know about the north? What does the south mean to you? What does a southerner mean to you? However, students also created almost 100 questions in total. Each person in the north was asked the main questions and then would answer an additional 15–30 questions they chose themselves from the extra questions in the research guide. Most northern participants wanted to answer most questions about the north, and then would offer a few suggestions for newcomers to the north and what southern people should know about the north and then they might offer one opinion or story about the south. This was consistent with all participants but not by design. This did however track with the students' interests, too. If we were to quantify the time spent on questions, 50–60% would be about the north, 25–35% advice to newcomers and the south and then 10–15% on the south. The richest answers about the south were the standard questions asked of everyone. There were 95 people interviewed in the north and the students all also answered the main questions.

This project differs from Dorais' (2005) paper on Arctic identity that focused on interviewing academics that work in the Arctic and used literature analysis to form an aboriginal perspective as northern responses were gathered through primary research. However, participant and student response does support his assertion that Inuit conceptions of identity were open-ended and individual but grounded in culture, place and history while being relational, continual and shared. Students also stressed the importance of the need for the room for ideas to exist independently as well as inclusively. To try and explain these ideas as a concrete example consider drum dancing. Songs belong to people and to communities but with permission others can dance them and even change them, but always credit is given to where the song is from and whose it is. The song and dance is individual first but also collective. An example for the south might be open source programming as it belongs to one person but is available to be used and adapted by other people. Participants were always very careful to express their thoughts as their own but also as still part of the community. Students were exceptionally careful when editing to ensure that they respected the individual integrity of the interview and often discussed this as a group. Below is a set of terms all the student researchers created (Table 1). It was the first exercise each group began with. Remarkably each group came up the same terms. I have included them to show the initial genesis and also because these were part of the research guide and always sparked great conversation and were the beginning point of each part of the research process from question creation to individual interviewing.

Personal projects and themes

As the project progressed and the group work focusing on the three themes became more refined, we received additional funding support and were able to begin expanding to allow students to do individual projects. We called it two-for-one research. So we were able to work as a group but also allow people the independence and freedom to pursue individual research goals. In January 2009 Denis Allen, acclaimed Inuvialuit filmmaker, came up and did an intensive one-week mini-film school. This was a pivotal point of expanding and deepening the research project and Allen's mentorship was very empowering for the students to start telling their own stories confidently. It was particularly rewarding and exciting to see what students wanted to create to show the world their north. Brett Purdy from the Inuvialuit Communications Society also joined us for that week and continued to support the students in class that semester and through into the summer. Indeed, in addition to the larger individual projects that summer students were able to create 12 small individual short video projects. This phase of the project was the best evolution an educator could possibly hope for. The goal of the project was to collaborate but it quickly developed into co-research and we were able to progress into a truly collegial process; ultimately, the research was co-presented at two academic conferences. However, the individual projects expanded into personal research. Educationally the students became extraordinarily self-directed. In retrospect this self-direction is no accident as who better to research northern identity but northerners? Indeed, the question concerning the research has usually been when will there be more of it? Currently, we are trying to integrate this research process into the Aurora College Aboriginal Language and Culture Instructor Programme and the Teacher Education Programme.

The individual projects all focused on northern themes but each was different and unique to the student. In the summer of 2009, these films were shown at the 'Open Sky Festival' in Fort Simpson, NWT and at the 'Great Northern Arts Festival' in Inuvik. They were also official selections at 'Polar Cinema' at the International Polar Year Oslo science conference in June 2010. Two of the works were group efforts, the first being a promotion of sorts that includes a vignette created by students that begins in black and white with a woman in a traditional parka setting a trap. Upon hearing a ring she digs into the snow to find a blackberry when the scene turns to colour. This has been the favourite in presentations as it does an excellent job of introducing the ideas of traditional and modern. The other group project is a dramatised piece for which the class rounds up three instructors, divests them of their modern gadgets and work items, gives them traditional clothes, and then leads them into the bush where they are going to go to 'northern school' until the spring. This is a fun piece that challenges the viewer to see the inversion of residential school and is also a big favourite. Two pieces look at stereotypes: one through

Table 1. Research terms and foundational thoughts.

North:	Northern:	Northerner:
Freedom	The communities of the north	Bilingual
Above 60th parallel	Of or in the north	Bi-cultural
Above tree line	Inhabiting the north	Homeland is heritage
Cold 9 months of the year	Tradition	Spring fever
24 hour daylight	Cultures	Born and raised
Clean (cleaner)	Foods	Keep traditional life
Arctic Ocean	Identities	Can be naturalised (half-lifer)
Polar bears/White bugs bunny	Societies	Accent
Community connections	Clothes	Sweat off suntan lotion
Exploration	Survival skills	Good tan in summer
Bush radios		Naturally tanned
Permafrost		Friendly
Northern lights		Relaxed
Informal		Delta-time (Throw away your watch)
The Northwest Territories		Good listeners
The cold region of North America		Good natured
Land of the midnight sun		Traditional knowledge
North of 60		A person or people of the north
The Arctic Boreal		A native or inhabitant of the north
Aurora Borealis		One living in the north
Delta		Inuvialuit
Permafrost		Gwich'in
Pingos		Aboriginal
Glaciers		Indigenous
Tundra		Native
Drunken trees		

South:	Southerner:
Anything more south than us	Race isn't as big a factor now
Up the river	40–50 years ago white but not now
Somewhere they have four seasons	Multi-cultural
Below the 60th parallel	Generally taller
As far as deline or as far as polar bears go	No similar characteristics with northerners
Degrees	Busy bodies
Land limited to backyard	More concerned with appearance
Northerners are moving south	Formal
	Great fibbers (Gov't-ise)
	Raised in south

interviews of high school students and the other a fast paced piece that shows that Inuvik has stores, running water, electricity, etc. The one student who is originally from the south created a humorous fictionalised account of her coming to Inuvik and all the false misconceptions that she had. Going on the land is the subject of two projects focusing on geese hunting and going to a family camp at Bekere Lake. Students also took the opportunity of displaying the Beaufort Delta with their films 'Ice road crossing' and 'Jenn's Aklavik'. The creation of a cooking show was another project, which is a fun bannock-making lesson. One student decided to create a tourist advertisement for the NWT. As it was the 25th anniversary of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement another student interviewed Inuvialuit Regional Corporation president Nellie Cournoyea. The topics of these projects echo the themes expressed by the students and interview participants of the need to communicate identity, cultural education, the importance of history, community and the land, aboriginal self-determination and some good fun with a lot of laughter.

These projects were posted on YouTube and on a Facebook Film fan page and enjoy modest use. The facebook page has over a hundred users per month, with the highest use in the first 8 months of over 700 hits per month and now averages about 250 users a month. The YouTube videos have over 2500 views as of this date, however, the facebook page is used far more often for video viewing. Given the size of the region this is very positive. It is planned to send DVD copies of the short videos, longer projects and three theme segments to all the schools and adult learning centres in the region. These films have been very popular in presentations at conferences throughout autumn 2009 to date. In January 2011, after a presentation at an International Polar Year conference in Inuvik, this project was said to be a favourite of the conference and almost 20 DVDs were handed out. It has been shown at lectures in Germany, the US, the

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UK, and Canada. This project is designed to be shared, as sharing is one of the founding principles and the value of generosity and reciprocity being central to the messages from the students and participants. These are their stories and words but they are meant for everyone, which echoes the concept of the shared individuality of northern identity.

The themes segments run for about a half hour each. The editing was a complex and time-consuming process taking most of the summer 2009 for the three intern students. The team was very disciplined and respectful in poring through the interviews by first transcribing, organising and then roughing in the videos. Allen returned in mid-July and worked with us on advanced filming and editing techniques. He also helped in the creation of the opening credits. Kendra Tingmiak worked on 'Northern studies' and Rachel Nakimayak worked on 'north-to-south' and these were both completed by mid-August. Shelby Steen handled the last section and she roughed in the work for 'Southern studies', which was then polished up by David Stewart and myself. It was a huge task and the student team did themselves proud by taking their work very seriously and respecting each participant's contribution. They also continued to film and worked on personal projects, fitting in fieldwork in Edmonton. Shelby worked extensively in front of the camera and was fantastic during interviewing. Rachel worked on a Northern Games project and Kendra looked at the history of education in the western Arctic. The Inuvialuit Communications Society did a one-hour television episode on the project and it aired in late Spring 2010 and continues to air periodically. The final part of the project will be to send the entire project out on DVD and this will be the final phase of data in Summer 2012. In Spring 2012 the longer theme segments and longer projects will be posted on the internet. More analysis of this part of the project will be forthcoming after these parts of the project are fully available.

Conclusions

Within the first few words of any southern-produced northern story, textual or media-based, you quite often will hear the word desolate. The recent Bruce Parry's 'Arctic' from the BBC is no different in initial language at least. If you look up the meaning you will come up with words like barren or laid waste, devastated, deprived or destitute of inhabitants, deserted, uninhabited, solitary, lonely: a desolate place, dreary, dismal and gloomy. When reading English poetry we are taught winter is a metaphor for death. There you have the gap in communication because in the north the word desolate is a crazy description for an abundant home and winter means life and good hunting. The peoples of northern Canada are an important part of Canadian identity. Despite this, within Canada, northerners feel largely ignored and when attention is paid to them they are misunderstood. Northerners want to be recognised for their contribution to Canadian culture and identity while remaining first and fundamentally northern. All participants saw themselves first and foremost as northerners but also as Canadians. As the north is of more and more of interest to southern Canadians and the international community northerners want to be understood, respected and their connection to their land be respected as an extension of their identity and autonomy.

Researchers need to work towards co-research as a way to create equitable and authentic results. This research project focused on how northerners saw themselves, saw their communities and saw their culture. It also asked questions about how northerners wanted their north to be seen and what they wanted southerners to know about the north. The project also embarked on a project of egalitarianism turning the tables on the south studying the north so the north would study the south. This issue of *Polar Record* is about contested identities and this contribution and project proposes that the best way to overcome the disputes, controversies and what is up for question is to ask questions. Northerners are more than ready to undertake research, which should be directed and conducted by the people and communities themselves. Northern hospitality still makes room for the southern researcher but the future is with a northerner in the lead. This is the only way to correct the power imbalances of the past and to create the bright future the north is waiting for. Co-research is also jolly fun.

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Regional and indigenous identities in the high north: enacting social boundaries

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ABSTRACT. This paper addresses two processes of social and cultural mobilisation. The first example is a regional movement, as manifested in social and cultural expressions of a north Norwegian identity that was particularly marked in the 1970s and early 80s. The other is the Saami movement, coming out strongly at about the same time, and being part of a global process of indigenous mobilisation. It is argued that although they are similar in the way they articulate a sense of identity and belonging in contrast to an overarching and encompassing state, they are different in their stated objectives, in their relation to the state and the type of achievements gained. The north Norwegian regional movement strived for inclusion into a wider national cultural tradition, and integration has been achieved by broadening the definition of what is considered Norwegian culture. The objective of the Saami movement was the opposite: to gain recognition as a people with a distinct culture, different from but equal in value with the Norwegian culture. The article is introduced by a theoretical discussion of the issues involved, framing the analysis of communicative strategies.

Introduction

This article examines two processes of mobilisation that are similar in that they articulate a sense of identity and belong in contrast to an encompassing state, (the state here is also seen as representing mainstream culture) and use much the same communicative strategies to express this, but are different in the stated objectives, relations to the state and the type of achievements gained. The first example is a regional movement, and I refer to social and cultural expressions of a north Norwegian identity that was particularly marked in the 1970s and early 80s. The other is the Saami movement, which emerged strongly at about the same time, being part of an international indigenous mobilisation. This movement inspired a new collective Saami self-understanding and contributed to the political organisation of the Saami. I will argue that to grasp the differences in the objectives and outcome behind the similarities in appearance, we need an analytical understanding of the differences of the issues involved. For this purpose we need concepts that capture the different qualities and functions of social boundaries and