

## Compte rendu

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par Martina Tyrrell

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McPHERSON, Robert

2003 *New Owners in Their Own Land, Minerals and Inuit Land Claims*, Calgary, University of Calgary Press, 305 pages.

McPherson begins his history of mineral exploration in the Arctic with the contention that resource development has been intrinsically linked with the land claims movement in Nunavut as elsewhere in the Canadian Arctic. "Others have pointed to the catalytic connection of resource development and land claim advancement," he writes (p. xiii) and in this volume he details that connection in exhaustive and intriguing detail. McPherson is an exploration geologist with extensive sub-Arctic and Arctic experience and has travelled and explored much of Nunavut as an employee of Comaplex Resources. Between 1989 and 1991 he was employed by the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut (TFN) as an advisor on subsurface land selections where his task was "simply to provide geological consulting by preparing compilations of mineral prospects in the NWT using maps, reports, and assessment records" (p. 204). Later he travelled to the communities to take part in the negotiation sessions that led to the final Nunavut land claims agreement. This volume outlines the history of mineral exploration and the attendant development of political awareness in the Canadian Arctic, eventually leading to the formation of Nunavut.

The book alternates chapters on the history of exploration in Nunavut (and the Northwest Territories more generally) and Inuit (and Inuvialuit) progression towards land claims agreements. Those chapters dealing with mineral exploration provide insights into the process of exploration and mining, the exploration industry's relationship with Inuit and the social, economic and political impact of mining on Inuit communities. The history of the Rankin Inlet nickel mine receives in-depth treatment from its initial discovery, through exploration and the operation of the mine and finally to its closure in 1962. Dissatisfaction and feelings of injustice regarding mine and community life led to the first tentative steps towards Inuit politicisation. Inuit from camps and from settled communities were drawn to the mine with its offers of employment, where a caste system of sorts developed with southern white and Inuit mine workers segregated both socially and economically. Racially separate community organisations existed with the white council holding the majority of power in the community. Upon closure of the mine a number of Inuit miners were relocated to other northern mines (for example in NWT and Nunavik) but the majority of workers found themselves unemployed, an unusual and difficult situation for families to find themselves in now they had become accustomed to a regular wage to supplement subsistence activities. During this time, in the 1950s and early 1960s, political power still eluded Inuit who continued to make decisions by consensus and whose fledgling politicians were unwilling to speak on behalf of others. But the experience of the Rankin Inlet nickel mine led to the beginnings of political activity, with Inuit tentatively expressing their anger at being treated as second class citizens in their own land. Subsequent exploration and mining chapters detail the exploration, economic and social histories of the Nanisivik mine at Arctic Bay, the Kiggavik mine near Baker Lake, the development of the Mackenzie Valley pipeline and the Polar Gas pipeline project. Not all these exploration projects were successful for the companies involved

and as Inuit became more outspoken and gained more political clout the ease with which the industry could carry out its activities declined sharply.

Throughout these exploration chapters there is a sense of growing Inuit unease with the activities of the mining industry, accompanied at times by government activities leading to displacement, resettlement in communities, forced education and the attendant sense of loss of a valued way of life. Inuit reaction to exploration and mining was predominantly negative. Low-flying planes threatened caribou populations, as did the detritus of mining—the barrels and cabins and general garbage left lying around once explorers had left an area. As Inuit grew more politicised leaders began to focus on environmental issues central to the continued well-being of the people who lived from the land and sea. The rights of caribou to live on the land unmolested by low-flying planes or the construction of pipelines were seen as intrinsic to Inuit rights as the health of one was dependant on the health and abundance of the other. Other environmental issues of immediate concern to all were mine tailings and contaminated water. These particularly came to light during the 1980s with the discovery of Nanisivik tailings contaminating ocean water off Baffin Island and the concern throughout Kivalliq regarding the proposed uranium mine at Kiggavik, the development of which was overwhelmingly vetoed by the residents of Baker Lake. With each exploration project there is increased advocacy regarding not only environmental issues of immediate concern to Inuit but also those of concern to peoples throughout the world, particularly with regard to the mining of uranium.

The history of exploration and mining is interspersed with the development and success of the various Native organisations throughout NWT and eventually those that led to the formation of Nunavut. The Committee for Original Peoples' Entitlement (COPE), Indian-Eskimo Association (IEA), and Keewatin Inuit Association (KIA) all receive attention as to the inspiration for their formation and their subsequent activities to make the voices of Native northern Canadians heard nationally. The organisation receiving most attention is Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITC) with one of its most active leaders, Tagak Curley, and his personal role in the formation of Nunavut, receiving intensive coverage. McPherson argues that it was Inuit (and northern peoples in general) concern about the impacts of mining and exploration that led to the formation of these organisations and they continued to find their *raison d'être* in their opposition to government policies concerning mining and the activities of exploration companies. The teething problems of the ITC are highlighted as McPherson notes that the organisation's vision for the future of an Inuit homeland was not always in accordance with ordinary Inuit living in the various Nunavut communities.

In the long years leading to the signing of the land claims agreement, Inuit of the Eastern Arctic learned much from the processes leading to the Inuvialuit and James Bay settlements. Political activity and reactions to exploration and mining in Alaska and Greenland served to further inform the process for Nunavumiut. In making its final preparations before beginning the negotiation process, the Tunngavik Federation of Nunavut knew exactly what it *didn't* want in light of the experiences of other northern peoples.

The environmental and social impacts of exploration and mining were of grave concern and it was these concerns that brought about and informed the land claims proposal. In the second last chapter McPherson outlines in exhaustive detail the process of land claims negotiations and settlement. In a personal note (p. 204) he informs the reader of his own involvement in the process. As such this seventh chapter is strikingly different from those preceding it. The bulk of the book is based on exploration reports, the minutes of meetings and interviews with leading political figures. In this chapter, however, the author travels to communities as part of the land claims process, attending the meetings that were at the core of the negotiation process, as Inuit struggle with and finally decide on ownership and control of their land.

As an anthropologist with scant knowledge of the mineral exploration industry, I found the book fascinating and accessible. McPherson aims the geological sections at a general audience, structuring them within the wider frame of political and social issues. His thesis of the strong link between exploration and land claims, while not new, is here given a more expansive treatment than I have previously come across. As he writes of the Inuit struggle for control and self-government he also presents an accessible geological survey of Nunavut. McPherson comments little, merely presenting the events chronologically, only occasionally berating industry or government while celebrating the evolution of Inuit political awareness and activity. For those interested in the genesis and process that led to the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (and other northern land settlements), in the geology of Nunavut and its extensive mineral exploration, or in the social and economic changes that have occurred in the territory throughout the 20th century, then this book is well worth the read.

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MARTIN, Thibault

2003 *De la banquise au congélateur. Mondialisation et culture au Nunavik.*  
Québec, Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 202 pages.

On trouve peu d'ouvrages sur le Nunavik contemporain. Cette plaquette de 200 pages, au titre aguicheur, est l'une des rares monographies publiées en français sur la société inuit du Nunavik d'aujourd'hui. Elle est ornée du sceau du programme de *Management of Social Transformation* de l'UNESCO et comprend une postface de Jean Malaurie, esquimologue francophone bien connu. L'auteur, professeur de sociologie à l'Université du Québec en Outaouais, est un ancien du GÉTIC (Groupe d'études inuit et circumpolaires) de l'Université Laval. Sa thèse de doctorat portait sur