

UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

The Geography of the Canadian North Issues and Challenges. By Robert M. Bone.

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/86h0r205>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 17(2)

ISSN

0161-6463

Author

Cozzetto, Don

Publication Date

1993-03-01

DOI

10.17953

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

The Geography of the Canadian North: Issues and Challenges.
By Robert M. Bone. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1992. 284 pages. \$24.95 paper.

This book on the challenges facing northern Canadians is a welcome addition to the academic literature. Bone frames his discussion around the premise that the arctic and subarctic regions of Canada are in a state of transition. This transition is predicated on three major issues: the impact of resource development on the northern people, the effect of development on the northern environment, and the role that aboriginal people play in this development scenario. The author attempts to assess the impact of this development on the northern geography and its people—in other words, he analyzes physical as well as human geography.

Renewable and nonrenewable resource development has occupied a dominant place in the political and economic development of northern Canada. Since the early days of the fur trade, resources have been extracted from the North and exported to southern and international markets. Little secondary processing is conducted in the North, and, as a result, wage economy jobs are exported to southerners along with the raw materials. This chain of events is often referred to as the core/periphery model, or colonial model, where the process of economic development is controlled by the dominant entity—in this case, southern Canadians and the international marketplace.

Bone correctly points out that political entities in both the South and the North have long supported resource development, oftentimes to the detriment of the native people (Dene, Inuit, and Métis) who represent the majority in the northern population. A second economy, the native or subsistence economy, takes a back seat to the pressures exerted by resource development.

Native groups are being assimilated by the nonnative population. Their languages and their traditional link to the land are slowly being destroyed. High unemployment, severe social problems, and lack of education in the native population have resulted in the creation of a third economy—the welfare economy. An appalling number of natives are now dependent on government welfare checks, a situation that is further destroying native culture.

Part 1 of the book describes the geography, climate, and anthropology of the arctic and subarctic regions of Canada. Chapter 3 is particularly important, because it outlines the impact, both posi-

tive and negative, of the fur trade, the whaling industry, the gold rush, and the presence of the military in the North.

Part 2 focuses on resource development and details how the natural resources of the North have been exploited, primarily by nonnative interests. Chapter 7 provides a comprehensive assessment of the environmental impact of resource development in the North. All environments are fragile, but the northern environment is particularly delicate. The author provides specific details on the negative effects of airborne particulates, PCB contamination, acid rain, and toxins discharged into northern waters.

The third part of the book discusses the aboriginal population and native land claims. Bone argues that prudent investment of monies received through land claims negotiations may allow native groups to bridge the gap between the wage economy and the traditional economy. He contends that native self-government provides the means whereby aboriginal people can control their own political and economic destiny. As a result, as the next century approaches, aboriginal self-government may be the only vehicle through which native people preserve what remains of their language, culture, and traditional pursuits.

Bob Bone's book is well written and researched. The figures, tables, and maps are very useful to the reader's understanding of the issues and challenges facing the people of the North. The vignettes presented in each chapter add a special flavor to the book. Like all of Bone's work, this book is first rate and is recommended reading to anyone interested in the Canadian North.

Don Cozzetto

University of North Dakota

Houses Beneath the Rock: The Anasazi of Canyon de Chelly and Navajo National Monument. Edited by David G. Noble. Santa Fe, New Mexico: Ancient City Press, 1992. 56 pages. \$8.75 paper.

Houses Beneath the Rock is a short, supplemental guidebook for visitors to northeastern Arizona consisting of six essays describing the Canyon de Chelly and Tsegi region of the American Southwest. The essays, edited by David Noble for the School of American Research series, are concerned with the archeology, history, and art of the Anasazi—the ancient ones—