First Theme:
Relevance of History

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Re-searching for Balance – Through Conversation*

Valgerður H. Bjarnadóttir

The Ravens have settled on the rocks in my backyard. Sometimes there are just the two, who seem to have made themselves at home there, sometimes a flock of 13, when I have just fed them with the leftovers from my kitchen. Their beautiful shining black bodies make perfect contrast with the white snowy earth. They fly and dance and converse and inspire me in my work. Yesterday they seemed excited about something, their dancing was a staccato movement and as their number increased on and around the rock their attention was all elsewhere. Suddenly they all took flight. I walked into the kitchen and looking out the window there to the North I saw the sky filled with ravens, all the ravens of the area it seemed. In the very centre of the black flock there was an even bigger more powerful bird, a silvery Gyrfalcon.

This was one of the moments when thinking makes way for experience, intuition, a deep nostalgic feeling that has nothing to do with ideas or opinions, nothing with belief, all with experiencing and remembering.

The thoughts came later. A falcon does not visit this town every day, and never before have I seen them accompanied by a flock of ravens. From the old myths I have learned that the Goddess Freyja often wore a falcon-cloak and that her companions, the valkyries, dressed as ravens or swans. For most people these old myths are now but vague memories. So might a sight like this become. A vague memory. The falcon is an endangered bird and has been for long, and the raven, one of the most common birds for any Icelander, has now joined the flock of endangered species.

Memories from the winter of 1998

It is said that to know where you're going, you need to know where you come from.

> It is said that the Great One created them equal, woman and man.

I would like to express my gratitude to the organisers of this important Forum, for inviting me to be a part of it. I am deeply concerned for the future of our home, whether we see it as the Arctic or as Earth herself. I am also convinced that if the Arctic is destroyed, so will the rest. I am concerned about my daughter's future and about people's lack of connectedness in modern society, with themselves and their roots and, therefore their inability to take responsibility for their own future.

The French philosopher Simone Weil wrote:

> *To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul. It is one of the hardest to define. A human being has roots by virtue of his (or her – my addition) real, active and natural participation in the life of a community which preserves in living shape certain particular treasures of the past and certain particular expectations for the future.*

* Invited Position Paper

Whether male or female, Icelandic, Sámi or Inuit, Norwegian, Russian or Canadian, the growing or nurturing of our roots means being in a constant authentic dialogue with the different parts of ourselves, as well as with the world around us. With the treasures of the past, as well as our expectations for the future. Our world and we the self-crowned masters of this mother earth have lost our balance and we must urgently re-search for it. Some of the answers to our questions lie hidden in our roots. Some in the conversation between us. There may never have been a time of perfect balance, there may never be. There has however been a time where the people of earth honored *the search for balance,* and the science of those peoples evolved around that search. For some six or eight thousand years man has been forgetting this basic science, this basic law of nature. This forgetfulness has led to wars and oppression and, later, ecological violation and consumption to the degree of total madness.

One of the truths that I have learned in my search is that whatever we think of the evolution of consciousness, the fact is that the ideas and beliefs of women and men gone before me, whether a hundred years, a thousand or five thousand, are just as deep and wise as those of the wisest and deepest today. I can "remember" how a woman perceived existence thousands of years back, because she left traces of it for me to follow. Those traces of thought are usually easiest to detect when they are written or orally remembered words, poetry, myths, stories. Through the art of women and men thousands of years back we can also detect traces of ideas and beliefs, which reflect what we know inside, but have forgotten. Sometimes this knowledge comes forth without detectable inspiration, as when a person's hands form a sculpture or a painting, or write poems and stories, containing "symbols" or images consciously unknown to this person. In our dreams of the night we often "experience" old myths or long forgotten happenings, without any logical explanation. The person remembers without conscious knowledge of what she or he is remembering.

There was a time when this kind of research was valued, when dreams and visions were valued. There are still cultures, here in the Arctic, where visions and dreams are still valued, but they are just as endangered as the falcon. The Norse queens and kings of Scandinavia as late as the 9th or 10th centuries sent their children to Sápmi to study with the wisemen and wisewomen, the scientists of that age. The Icelandic word for science is *vísindi,* literally wisdom. A *vísindakona* (literally science-woman) was of old the *völva* (literally she who turns or revolves; Latin: volvere), the sibyl or seeress, the one who could dream and vision the connections. She could relate one fact or sign to another, see the whole picture and connect to make a whole, a logical sense.

When the late archaeomythologist Marija Gimbutas started collecting folksongs and tales from the old ones in Lithuania at the age of 16, she may have been unconscious of the fact that she was actively re-collecting her inner ancient and yet timeless beliefs. When she later studied archaeology she was still researching those same beliefs, to still later become aware of, remembering, the meaning of it all. When she held the remnants of old European cultures in her woman's hands she started to remember her roots. She remembered who she was and where she came from, and what she believed in. She remembered the meaning of her life and she expressed it. And her passionate expression of what she remembered has helped millions of others to remember. That is the kind of re-search needed in our imbalanced North. Our particular luck in this area, is that so much of the old wisdom, the old science, is still living and thriving amongst us.

However, in this part of the world as elsewhere, the imbalance between the scientific status of modern and indigenous sciences is a barrier. So is the imbalance between male and female influence. The imbalance in man's relationship with nature seems to be in correlation with male/female imbalance. Although I am no expert on either history, indigenous science or modern science, I believe that in using history, mirrored in indigenous science on the one hand and in the human created imbalance of nature on the other, we just might have a chance to turn the wheel and head towards a restored balance. This will not be done, however, without the active participation of

women. If we are not willing and able to restore the natural balance between the two fundamental human energies, male and female, all other efforts of gaining balance become superficial and therefore useless.

I have come to the conclusion – long since – that my view of the world, and the way I attain and approach knowledge, is based on the fact that I am a woman. Not only as a social being, but also as a physical being. This may seem adversary to another belief of mine, that I am everything, and can access the male part in me as well as the woman's, but that's the lovely paradox. I do not think that my view is limited to women, not accessible to men, I merely think that it is more innate or natural to a woman than to a man. I will not go in detail into explaining this difference, nor the source of it, and I want to make clear that I am fully aware of the social and cultural effects of gender. But my womanness is an essential part of me, my Northernness is another.

It is in a woman's body, in the womb, that we all, women and men, begin our journey in this world, that is where our first awareness resides, and from there we have our first memories, the memories of being One with the mother, the source. This memory is respected among the indigenous peoples of the world, and in a conversation with them others can learn to remember. We can still find traces of this way of thinking here in Iceland, we can still find people who are in close contact with the land and the sea, and the creatures that walk this earth and swim in the sea. But they are few. This connection is much stronger amongst the indigenous nations of Northern Scandinavia, Russia and America, in spite of the enormous problems they face every day. This may sound like a romanticised idea, a popular fix to modern problems. It is not. I'm simply stating the urgent need for us all to allow the kind of research which can only be accomplished in an ongoing conversation, between the inhabitants of the Arctic who live according to different mindsets and totally different views of man's role on earth, and in that conversation we must involve equally women and men.

The 13th century Christian scholar Snorri Sturluson, wrote in his prologue to the *Edda* about the old beliefs and the evolution of consciousness. He explained how people of old saw a connection between the earth and all living beings.

> *From this they reasoned that the earth was alive and had a life after a certain fashion, and they realized that it was enormously old and mighty in nature. It fed all creatures and took possesion of everything that died. For this reason they gave it a name and traced their ancestry to it.*

Later, he says, they realized that there had to be an even older power behind the universe, the heavenly bodies the sea and the weathers and

> *they gave names to everything, and this religion has changed in many ways as nations became distinct and languages branched. But they understood everything with earthly understanding, for they were not granted spiritual wisdom. Thus they reasoned that everything was created out of some material* (transl. Anthony Faulkes, 1987, p.1-2).

Now we know that the people of old were right. Everything is created out of some material. In the meantime, we have fallen into the trap of dualism, as Snorri already had. We have distinguished between spirit and material, we have defined them as opposites, and worse, we have set spirit above material, heaven above earth. Man above woman. Western man has appointed himself as master of earth, spirits representative.

A small example of this blindness was a footnote in the program for the forum. The dress code for the Gala Dinner and the summary section at Bessastaðir was **Dress code: Dark suit.* Although this example is utterly insignificant, I found it illuminating. As a woman I could have found this exclusion offensive, and so might the President of the Sami Parliament (forgive me if I am jumping to conclusions). My experience is that the indigenous people of North, almost without exception, dress up in their national costumes at special occasions, and the Sámi and Inuit costumes are far from being a dark suit. Of course it took no great effort to change this little footnote, so

that we could all be as colorful as we chose. I believe it is of utmost importance that we face the fact of the imbalance created out of this magnomanic illusion of western male-dominated cultures, which has by now spread to societies all around the globe. All countries suffer from a male-female imbalance, as well as an imbalanced nature.

I want to make it clear that I don't mean to suggest that women are in any way better than, less blind than, or superior to men, not at all. I don't mean to suggest that women are less responsible for the situation of our world than men are. We have all created this situation, and therefore we are all equally responsible for setting things right. But things will never become right if the power of woman is not allowed to stand by the side of man's power. If we men and women of the world don't find the female source within us all, this imbalance will only deepen further and without this fundamental dialogue and integration of female and male energies, there will be no foundation for any true growth.

I believe we need to look to the ancestors and the old myths to be able to dream a sustainable future into reality. I hear callings for new myths to guide us. I don't think we need them, myths are in a way timeless. If we look closely there is no contradiction between the old myths and the new science. There is no contradiction between indigenous science and western science. They are equal but different ways of looking at life and defining our world. What we need is to see and acknowledge both as guiding tools for modern humans in balance with earth.

In the old poem *Völuspá* the *völva* foresees how the violated earth sinks into the sea and then is born again.

She sees being born
a second time
green earth growing
great from the sea
Falling waters
flying eagle
from the mountain
fish catching.

Völuspá, The Poetic Edda
(own translation)

Let us not wait for earth to get rid of us, so that she can be reborn, green from the sea. Let us be part of this rebirth, by focusing on research and actions which enhance balance, together woman and man, using indigenous and western scientific methods and sources.

Myths are about re-membering. Dreams are about re-searching. Dancing and singing can be about re-viewing, moving the cells in our bodies, spinning, spiraling so that they get in touch with the memory installed there. Conversing with nature re-stores memory. Conversing across cultures and gender is a valuable research method.

New Dynamics of Cultural Research and Representation in Alaska*

Aron L. Crowell

Alaska Natives number more than 90,000 people and speak 20 indigenous languages. This cultural diversity exists against an historical background of cultural repression as well as the contemporary resurgence of indigenous rights, resource ownership, political autonomy, and cultural voice. Within this context, the relationship between Alaska Native peoples and cultural researchers from outside their communities has undergone a fundamental transformation. Anthropologists, archaeologists, historians, economists, and other social scientists, as well as the universities, museums, government agencies, private companies, and foundations that employ and support them, all stand on a far different footing with respect to Native communities than was the case until even the last decade.

Today, researchers seek permission, collaboration, and communication as a matter of course. Information is shared with communities, and ethical standards of informed consent, indigenous participation, data sharing, and respect for privacy are pre-conditions for project approval and funding (e.g. *Guidelines for Research,* Alaska Federation of Natives; *Principals for the Conduct of Research in the Arctic,* U. S. Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee and the National Science Foundation; *Draft Principals for an Arctic Policy,* Inuit Circumpolar Conference). Alaska Native communities have also prioritized self-representation of their cultures in books, media, and museums.

In the long history of arctic research, these principles and responsibilities were often unrecognized or ignored. In broad terms, the indigenous critique of traditional social science practice indicts researchers for lack of community review and access to publications, disrespect for cultural values, disregard for restrictions on the use of oral traditions, removal of objects without proper permission, disturbance of burials and removal of human remains for study, failure to reciprocate village cooperation, lack of credit and financial return to Native colleagues, and other offenses.

Reform of the relationship between researchers and communities can be credited in large measure to advocacy by regional, national, and international indigenous organizations, as well as to specific U. S. federal legislation. Repatriation laws have had a broad impact, including both the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) and the related National Museum of the American Indian Act, which applies specifically to the Smithsonian Institution and its Native American collections. NAGPRA and the NMAI Act reassign legal ownership of many human remains and certain categories of cultural objects (sacred items, objects of cul-

* Invited Position Paper

tural patrimony, grave goods) from federally-supported museums to tribes. Widely resisted at first by museums and anthropologists, these laws redressed some of the most fundamental grievances of Native communities and shifted indigenous rights to the forefront.

The U. S. National Science Foundation (NSF), the leading source of northern social science funding (almost $2 million in fiscal year 2000 through its Arctic Social Sciences division in the Office of Polar Programs) has been highly influential by directing its support toward projects that actively involve the cooperation and participation of local communities (*Arctic Social Sciences: Opportunities in Arctic Research*, ARCUS 1999). The many federal agencies that conduct social science research in the north have also adopted goals and standards that reflect the new priorities. Agency work is coordinated by the U. S. Arctic Research Commission and the Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee (IARPC) *(see Arctic Research of the United States,* published biannually by IARPC).

In recent years, the NSF supported creation of the Alaska Native Science Commission to encourage collaborative project design in such areas as northern contaminants research and incorporation of traditional ecological knowledge into environmental and climate change studies. NSF also provides principal support for the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative, a statewide effort with the University of Alaska and the Alaska Federation of Natives to develop culturally integrated science and mathematics curricula for Alaskan schools. The emphasis is on incorporating local knowledge and Native world views into science teaching. The Smithsonian Institution's Arctic Studies Center (National Museum of Natural History) has played a role in establishing new working relationships for research and education with indigenous communities in Alaska, Canada, and Russia.

Beyond these specific institutional initiatives is a growing recognition that a collaborative, community-based research model can be applied in a wide range of contexts, and work effectively within the value systems of both villages and scientific disciplines. Archaeological excavations, linguistic studies, oral history, cultural landscape studies, subsistence studies, documentation of museum collections, and recording of indigenous knowledge of arctic ecosystems are a few examples of current cooperative work. Both communities and researchers benefit from consultation, information sharing, cost-sharing, and co-design of such projects, and many are organized, funded, and/or directed by Alaska Native organizations. Such projects help to support essential goals of Alaska Native communities – the integration of cultural heritage and contemporary identity, social health, education, and management of critical resources. Local involvement and educational outreach can be incorporated through many channels. For example, anthropologists and others contribute to the development of tribal museums, cultural centers, and exhibits, and to educational materials for schools.

A few specific areas of active collaborative research may be highlighted in the present context. For example, human interactions with the changing arctic environment are an important focus of interdisciplinary and cross-cultural study. With NSF support, Henry Huntington and the Inuit Circumpolar Conference worked with North Alaskan coastal communities to document traditional ecological knowledge of beluga whales and their migrations. The Marine Mammal Commission (with Caleb Pongawi) has compiled hunters' observations of shifts in whale, walrus, caribou, and seabird behavior. Anthropologists with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game cooperated with the University of Alaska and communities in Prince William Sound and Cook Inlet to develop educational films and interactive CD-ROMs about local subsistence practices and traditional knowledge. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, Alaska Nanuuq Commission, and Union of Marine Mammal Hunters of Chukotka recently collaborated on an international study of polar bears that relied heavily on indigenous observations. A recent workshop by the Marine Mammal Commission, National Oceanic and

Atmospheric Administration, and National Marine Fisheries Service focused on linking climate change observations by scientists and Native communities.

Archaeology provides a window into cultural history and human-environmental interactions in the past. Archaeological sites can be ideal opportunities for collaborative study and community involvement because they are often in or accessible to contemporary villages and are easily linked to school programs, training opportunities, local cultural heritage efforts, and tribal museums. The National Science Foundation and the Kodiak Area Native Association co-sponsored excavations by Bryn Mawr College at the Karluk 1 site on Kodiak Island, leading to a wide range of educational efforts and the foundation of the Alutiiq Museum in 1995. The Utqiagvik Archaeology Project in Barrow (State University of New York, North Slope Borough, National Park Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs) was another landmark project. Research was carried out jointly, including studies made of human remains recovered at the site. Over the past 15 years, many excavations and field schools have featured close cooperation between Native organizations and the National Park Service (especially its Shared Beringian Heritage Program), University of Alaska, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Arctic Studies Center, and other agencies and universities.

Museums, collections, and exhibitions are another highly active area of cultural study and collaborative effort. Archaeological and ethnological collections, scholarly reports and publications, photographs, and archival research data gathered during two centuries of scientific contact in the north are of inestimable value to present-day Alaska Native communities. A network of new Alaska Native museums and cultural centers has opened over the past five years in Anchorage, Barrow, Kodiak, Unalaska, Bethel, and other locations. These organizations house cultural collections and have become focal points for local and regional projects in oral history, archaeology, and traditional arts. These institutions are locally run and supported, and provide an important venue for self-representation of cultural values and perspectives.

The on-going process of repatriation under NAGPRA, which requires extensive consultation between outside museums and tribal groups, has created a new awareness of the wealth of Alaskan collections in U. S. museums and around the world. The Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History alone holds more than 35,000 ethnological objects from Alaska, of which some portion will eventually go back to the state through repatriation. Others will return through exhibits developed by the Arctic Studies Center (ASC) in coordination with Alaska Native organizations, the Anchorage Museum of History and Art, and other partners. An example is ASC's *Looking Both Ways: Heritage and Identity of the Alutiiq People,* which was co-developed with the Alutiiq Museum using information provided by Alutiiq elders and scholars. ASC offers ongoing student internships and community scholar opportunities and over the next two years will work on a major project with Alaska Native consultants to document Smithsonian collections and to produce new exhibits, publications, and a web site. The Anchorage Museum's *Living Tradition of Yup'ik Masks* is another prominent example of community-based exhibition development, and has been followed by further NSF-sponsored study of European museum collections by Yup'ik elders (with curator Ann Fienup-Riordan).

Information may be returned in other ways. For example, ASC's Beringian Yup'ik Heritage Project (led by Igor Krupnik, Willis Walunga, Vera Metcalf, and Lyudmilla Ainana) has assembled historical documentary records, notes, maps, and genealogical data from the past century of anthropological research on St. Lawrence Island to create a community sourcebook of Yup'ik heritage and history.

It is clear that a new paradigm of U. S. arctic social science has emerged in response to broad political, legal, and intellectual trends. The opportunities and challenges are both large. Joining local and scientific knowledge in the area of environmental observation is difficult, and requires the construction of new interpretive frameworks. An increasingly important issue in cultural research is intellectual property.

Research protocols signed with indigenous entities now often call for restricted access to the information gathered, in line with cultural values and fears that it will be misused or misrepresented. To what extent will researchers agree to restrictions on publication? Repatriation entails other unresolved matters that may undermine the collaborative efforts of Native communities and museums, including disagreement over what objects can be defined under the law as sacred or as inalienable because of cultural patrimony. In general, and across all aspects of social and cultural research, collaboration with indigenous communities requires time, patience to listen, and willingness to share control and to work toward alternative goals.

Two Northern Stories Meet Two Northern Projects

Andrei Golovnev

More than a decade has passed since the iron curtain fell, unlocking gateways for intercultural and interethnic communication throughout Northern Eurasia and the whole North. During that time, many obviously fruitful contacts were replaced by opposite trends, such as the appearance of the newly entrenched borders between Russia and Baltic countries. Once again, political and economic priorities were many jumps ahead of human relations, evolving and highlighting deadlocks previously concealed. Today Russia seems to be even more suppressed by political booms and games than it was under the pressure of totalitarianism years ago.

The striking diversity of peoples and cultures in Russia clashes with a striking scarcity of intercultural encouragement and enrichment. That is the cause of the Russian heartache currently erupting in Chechnya, and simmering in many other ethnic communities. Neither political nor institutional reforms can dispose of this controversy before the notion of „ethnicity" has been returned from the battlefield to the field of mutual reverence and cooperation. Obviously, the way to overcome hostility is the same as the way to overcome ignorance. A multilateral dialogue of cultures and peoples, which avoids political ambitions and emphasizes cultural values seems to be a real path for northern interregional and international contacts, for communities and regions to resolve their differences in the harsh political environment.

The Northern Route: From the Old Bjarmia to the New Northern Europe

The background of the first story is extensive. Prehistorically and historically, the coastal territory of the White, Barents and Kara Seas appeared to be a relatively self-sufficient cultural realm, despite its various connections to southern political headquarters. Ethnographically, the system of indigenous ethnic communication provided consolidation rather than division of the arctic territories. Saami and Samoyeds covered vast areas along the Arctic Ocean, from Scandinavia to the Taymyr peninsula. Intensive horizontal links connected the Samoyeds (Nenets), despite their stretching over boundless tundra, into a vast and unified cultural entity and allowed them to keep speaking one dialect from the White Sea to the Yenisei River. The boundaries which divided, or connected, Saami, Samoyeds, Ostiaks, Chukchi and others were adequate to traditional activities, sometimes being established by intertribal centers of trade and rituals. Natural (native) borders were floating due to migrations, conflicts, epidemics or climatic fluctuations. The northern system of communication was considerably broader in the past and oriented to another set of wants and needs.

Artificial borders were brought to the North from Southern political centers. Sometimes the attitude of the political capitals towards the northern territories, especially during periods of centralization, showed

more jealousy than consent. In the Russian case, for example, in the 14th century, Moscow (Ivan I, Dimitry) took over Novgorod's tributaries; in the 15th (Ivan III), it cancelled Novgorodian political autonomy; in the 16th (Ivan IV), it mounted a blood purge against Novgorod; in the 17th (Michael Romanov), it restricted the use of the Northern sea route by Pomors; in the 18th (by decree of its founder, Peter I) Saint-Petersburg annihilated the Pomor fleet. In response, Novgorodians, Russian Pomors, and Samoyeds maintained, and even strengthened, their opposition to Central-Russian policy, not least to serfdom and the State Church (most of the Pomors were rigid Old-believers, while Samoyeds remained heathens).

South-north opposition in Russia grew out of a profound confrontation between two conflicting cultural and political traditions, the northern (Novgorod) system formed under Scandinavian influence, and the southern (Moscow) system which originated from the Tartars and Mongolians. The duel between the „Nordic" and „Turkic" political traditions did not end when Moscow finally defeated Novgorod in 1570. It was, and still is, a continuing struggle between the impetus towards centralization and towards regionalization. Particularly, it is imprinted in the history of those northern peoples and territories where Novgorod preceded Moscow for a half a millennium, and where northern tradition had been deeply rooted. Initially the main difference between the two opposing Russian cultural-political centers could be seen in their manner of ruling colonies or subordinated territories. Novgorod produced, in fission style, a chain of new centers based upon a network of trade; Moscow, through tax collection, subdued, in centripetal style, a vast surrounding area through administrative coercion.

Coming back to the sources of Northern tradition, one can easily find the Viking (and pre-Viking) Baltic-Scandinavian influence upon the Upper Rus' (the old name of Northern Russia, in contrast to the Lower, or Southern, Russia). Viking raids preceded the Novgorodians' movement to the north and east. Ladoga (Aldejgja), the Viking headquarters in the east, played a key role in the origins of the Rus' and, later, in the Russian movement south-east, to the Caspian Sea along the Volga River, and north-east to the Bjarmia (Bjarmaland). Icelandic sagas tell about routes to Bjarmia through both the Barents/White (Gandvík) and Baltic Seas. Russian chronicles in turn tell the story of Ladoga's Jarl Uleb (a Swedish Viking) who in 1032 mounted raids which reached to the Iron Gates (the old name of the Kara Gate Strait).

The well-known etymology of *bjarmar,* from the Baltic-Fennic *perä-maa* ('back land', 'land behind the frontier') and the obvious correspondence of the Nordic 'Bjarmia' with the Russian 'Perm', give a clue to the Viking-Ladogian-Novgorodian route north and east. Mediaeval Russian chronicles mention *Koloperem'* (Kola Perm) and *Perm'* (Old Perm' on the Vychegda River) among the Novgorodian tributaries; Saxo Grammaticus in the early 13th century also noted two Bjarmias. 14th century Russian sources mention also the Great (Velikaia) Perm' — the third Bjarmia — on the Kama River, near the Urals. It is still questionable who brought this name to the Urals: Vikings, Ladogians or Novgorodians. It is quite clear, however, that the area of 'back land' moved, or retreated, further east due to the Viking-Ladogian-Novgorodian expansion. Starting from the Kola peninsula, this track reaches to the Kama River, where the latest version of 'Bjarmia' is preserved in the place-name Perm' and the ethno-name, Komi-Permyak.

A project, launched by the author and Dr. Lassi Heininen, has as its main objective the tracing of the connections between peoples, cultures and societies of the Eurasian North, from the North Atlantic in the west to the Northern Urals in the east. In several historical periods — for example, the Viking Era, the Novgorod Era (from the 11th to the 15th century), the Pomorian Era (from the 15th until the 17th century), and the Russian Empire Era (from the 18th until the beginning of the 20th century) — there have been contacts and connections between Fennoscandia, the Russian North, the Urals and Siberia by Saami and Samoyeds/Nenets, and Scandinavians, Finns and Russians. In the Soviet Era, starting in the 1920s, the pattern of northern interrelations changed dramatically due to the isolationism of the Soviet Union and, later, to the Cold War which froze cooperation and emphasized military political affairs.

After Great Novgorod had been devastated by Moscow troops, the Pomors and western seafarers were those who maintained the northern connections in spite of, and sometimes as a counter to, prohibitions by the central powers. Even during the Soviet Era in the 1920s, the northern route was still in use by some northern Russian Pomors and Scandinavians. Indigenous peoples, Saami and Samoyeds (Nenets), played key roles as the permanent stakeholders on this route, and these connections remained in most cases independent from the southern centers.

These links, and this historical tradition of international and inter-cultural contact, are too little known today, when northerners are looking more and more attentively at the Arctic as a path convenient for re-establishing horizontal connections between European and Russian regions in the North. The historical underpinnings of the aforementioned project, suggest a particular approach to understanding the sources of sustainability and the long-term continuity of the relationships between northern indigenous peoples and other northerners. It is important to keep in mind that the idea of the „New Northern Europe" is not really a new discovery, but a renewal of the old historical tradition. This is not only a multidisciplinary research project, as a part of the work of the NRF, but also a way to make known the history of the northern regions to the general public.

A Traveling Northern Film Festival

The second story touches on recent events related to the ethnic revival movement in Russia. Anthropological films, as well as cultural anthropology, should be the gateways for intercultural dialogue within and outside Russia. In the Soviet era, the Estonian center of Tartu hosted a festival of anthropological films. Then, in the post-soviet years, after a disturbing pause, Salekhard, the administrative center of Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug (region), took responsibility for holding the 1st (1998) and 2nd (2000) Russian Festivals of Anthropological Films (RFAF). RFAF aimed successfully at becoming the interregional and international cultural forum for filmmakers, scholars, artists, journalists, and other participants. The exchange of ideas, knowledge, and experience in filmmaking and other visual arts, and research in different fields of culture and ethnicity should strengthen the general status of cultural activity. This is the forum where every participant has a voice, where peoples are not thought of as „big" or „small," overdeveloped or underdeveloped, where beliefs and religions are not thought of as „good" or „bad," politically blessed or prohibited. This is the cultural venue for the expression of the authors' personal discoveries. This is a meeting place where those who are eager to perceive their own and others' cultural values can make bridges across borders, preserving and disseminating their cultural legacy.

The results of the two RFAFs were critically discussed by Russian and international experts. One of the crucial needs, mentioned unanimously, is that of moving from biennial meetings to continuous activity, by linking the RFAF with other similar events. Another point is to encompass as many regions, countries, peoples, cultures as possible, though the RFAF originates in the Yamal-Nenets region, with an emphasis on Uralic (Finno-Ugric and Samoyedic) peoples and cultures.

The first step towards broadening the festival's scale was made in June 2000 by organizing, in Petrozavodsk (Karelia), a session of short documentary films (by Finnish, Karelian, and Russian artists, combined with a seminar on the 'Anthropological Film as Message') which was conjoined with the Day of the City, and a symposium on 'Finnish-Karelian-Russian Dialogue.' The festival-symposium was, at the same time, promoted as an activity under the aegis of the NRF. This cooperation between the NRF and the RFAF provided an opportunity to propose the idea of an international Traveling Northern Film Festival as a project for the NRF.

A Traveling NFF presupposes international circulation through various channels, and in various forms. The calendar of the festival series could be coordinated with schedules of existing festivals (e.g. the biennial RFAF, which will next be held in Salekhard, in September 2002), though that wouldn't exclude the development of new and experimental actions. The

idea of a Traveling NFF which was proposed at the 1st Northern Research Forum (Iceland 2000) should be further discussed and reviewed in the session 'Film/Video on Indigenous Peoples of the North' within ICAAS IV. The integrative focus of the session is to put together different experiences on how an anthropological approach facilitates cultural self-awareness and interpretation, how it makes it possible to cross ethnic, administrative and political borders, facilitating intercultural and interethnic dialogue on the North, allowing for the mutual translation of various cultural values and stereotypes, and revealing how diverse and many-hued the circumpolar cultural realm is today.

The 2nd RFAF was complemented with a special session on the NRF initiative. One decision of the session was to launch the Northern Research Forum of Russia. A second initiative was that of broadening RFAF's international presence. The 'Traveling Northern Film Festival' project seems to provide an effective channel for NRF activity, taking into account that the NRF is also a 'traveling' Forum. It implies that the Forum should participate in a variety of events (conferences, expeditions, festivals, etc.), emphasizing the theme of dialogue between peoples, cultures, and countries of the North.

Circumpolar Regions: Frontier or Homeland Historical Relevance of the East-West Dynamic in Relation to South-North Priorities

Shelagh D. Grant

In terms of the historical record on East-West relationships in the circumpolar regions, there appears to be a common theme dating back to the earliest known times and forward to the present - that of the need for cooperation as opposed to conflict for survival in a polar environment. For many years, especially during the Age of Imperialism and more recently during the Cold War, cooperative endeavours were frequently at odds with the divisive national interests inherent in the South-North dynamic directed by southern-based governments. Rather than being a document filled with historical detail, this paper will present an overview of the historical trends and pressures on the East-West dynamic. The term „dynamic" is defined here as a motive force and applied to inter-relationships between circumpolar countries.[1]

Beginning with the arrival of the first immigrants to the polar regions of North America, there was a tendency to seek cooperation with one's immediate neighbours to optimize the sharing of resources required for survival - notably for food, clothing, accommodation, and travel. If cooperation was not forthcoming, neighbours would still seek means to avoid outright conflict. As an example, in the case of the Thule Inuit arriving at locations already inhabited by the Dorset Inuit, there were no reports of conflict over resources, but merely the departure of the weaker Dorset Inuit (called Tuniit by the Inuit) to other regions, until their eventual demise during the Little Ice Age. This tendency was only relevant to the Inuit. The northern Indian tribes residing in North America, originating from earlier migrations from Siberia that had moved southward towards warmer climates, were known to have aggressively attacked Inuit camps, just as they did with the Norsemen who attempted to settle at L'Anse Meadows in what is now known as northern Newfoundland. In general terms, however, it appears that cooperation and deference were considered essential to survival in an Arctic environment.

Applying these same principles to the European and Asian circumpolar regions is more problematic, possibly because conditions above the treeline had a significantly different impact on cultural traditions than those in the sub-Arctic. Similarly, the situation in Iceland was not comparable to that experienced elsewhere in the circumpolar regions, which had been settled for many thousands of years before the arrival of Asians or Europeans to their shores. Instead, the first Norsemen who settled in Iceland around 870 AD found an uninhabited island. Even then, the need for peaceful co-existence seemed to be the primary motive behind the expulsion of Erik the Red and his family, who departed in 970 AD to settle in Greenland. Some stories about their early encounters with the indigenous peoples found there (called Skraelings by the Norse) suggested violent clashes,

but archaeological evidence shows extensive trade relations between the two races with some legends suggesting close friendships had existed.[2] In Europe and Asia, the continued existence of numerous indigenous peoples - such as the Sami, Komi, Khanty and Mansi, Yakuts, Dolgans Yukagirs, and Chukchi to name only a few - suggest there must have been some form of peaceful co-existence established there as well.[3]

The Age of Imperialism, as it applied to European and Russian expansion, marked a new era for the northern hinterlands of the circumpolar countries. During this period, they were considered a frontier for discovery and exploration, and, in the process, a means of expanding a nation's boundaries and its access to resources. As such, it also marked the beginning of southern influence and, in some regions, attempts at colonization. Polar exploration continued over several centuries and, in a sense, was still ongoing during the immediate post-war period of World War II, when the United States Army Air Force actively sought undiscovered islands in the Arctic Archipelago for use as military outpost camps.[4] To the best of my knowledge, there were few if any incidents where the indigenous peoples violently resisted the various forms of control exerted by the southern nation states. Instead, it would appear that cooperation and deference were practised in the most northerly lands of both hemispheres. Once most lands had been „discovered," the Arctic shifted from being an exploration frontier to being a scientific frontier, as reflected in the First International Polar Year of 1882-83, dedicated to the sharing of knowledge gained from active studies. Another fifty years would pass before a Second International Polar Year took place in 1932-33. Much of the shared knowledge during these initiatives centred on the environment and the possibilities for future development.

During the 18th and 19th centuries and into the first half of the twentieth century, the northern hinterlands of the circumpolar nations were largely viewed in economic terms, as a source of wealth - whether in the form of minerals, furs, whales, or other natural resources. In the North American Arctic, these resources were extracted and exported south, in most cases without major benefit to the inhabitants. On this point, it might be argued that Greenland was a notable exception. In Fennoscandia, the Sami and their ancestors were thought to have inhabited their lands since the end of the Ice Age - approximately eight thousand years. Although these hunters would, on occasion, be forced to pay tribute in the form of furs and hides to the Norse Kings, for the most part they appear to have been left alone. In Russian Siberia, the indigenous peoples were initially a source of trade in ivory and furs, but the creation of the USSR greatly altered their lives because of the concerted efforts to integrate them into industrialization projects and into Russian society. As a result, the voice of these original inhabitants were muffled, if not silenced, and their culture, for the most part lost.

By mid-century, the northern polar regions had taken on a new importance. With advances in aviation changing the character of war, the North American Arctic gained strategic significance during the Second World War and, increasingly so, during the Cold War. For the United States, the polar regions became central to its defence plans for the western hemisphere, just as the Asian Arctic became critical to the military strategy of the USSR. European circumpolar nations, such as the Scandinavian countries and Great Britain, were also drawn into in a northern military strategy through NATO commitments in the defence of Europe. Iceland, which had gained partial independence in 1912 - and full independence in 1944 - seemed less vulnerable to American pressures than other members of the NATO alliance. Although there were numerous efforts made by southern-based governments to improve the living conditions of their northern residents in the post-war years, the indigenous peoples did not gain any significant voice in such matters for several decades. For American scientists and, most likely, those of the USSR as well, the Arctic frontier had essentially become identical with a military frontier, a venue for testing new technologies, and it remained so until attention shifted to the space frontier.

Even among the more liberal minded, the importance of the Arctic regions after the Second World War was measured only in terms of southern benefits. As

Laurence Gould, President of Carleton College in Minnesota, pointed out in the prestigious Bowman Memorial Lecture of 1958, it would only be when peace was restored that „the economic strategic importance of the northlands will exceed their military significance."[5] Significantly, there was no reference in his speech to the needs of northern peoples or the responsibility of southern governments to attend to those needs. The attitude there reflected would change dramatically over the next two decades, but even so, the authors of The Circumpolar North, published in 1978, concluded their study with the view that the northern peoples were not likely to be successful in exerting any major influence upon the southern-based governments of their respective countries. Nor did they believe that the circumpolar countries themselves would have any sizable influence on major powers elsewhere in the world.

> It is unlikely that the circumpolar countries will ever become an exclusive group. All of them, perhaps excepting Iceland, have 'southern' interests which are more significant to the nation than their 'northern' interests. They will enter into agreements with other countries on the basis of many areas of shared concern, and northern lands and seas will be only one of these, in most cases rather low on the list. Furthermore, countries outside the group may have valid interest in the north. So the polar Mediterranean does not have a unifying pull, and a 'polar club' or community among the powers is not likely to emerge. Nevertheless, the northern countries share many interests, and it is for their statesmen to ensure that these become the basis for co-operation rather than division.[6]

The creation of the Arctic Council less than twenty years later indicates that even the most respected arctic experts could be wrong in their predictions. The future success or failure of the Council will determine how wrong.

Generalizations are difficult to apply in the last quarter of the twentieth century, as changes occurred at different rates and took different forms in each circumpolar country. Scientific knowledge of the northern regions had been shared for centuries, but exchanges between the scientists of the USSR and other northern countries abruptly ended with the escalation of the Cold War, and did not resume until its end. Pressures to combine efforts and share knowledge came from other quarters. In the 1970s, for instance, the northern indigenous peoples ignored national boundaries and joined together to protest southern-directed activities that threatened their homelands. In November 1974, they gathered at the Indigenous Arctic Peoples Conference held in Copenhagen to discuss their various concerns. In 1977, the first Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC) was held in Barrow, Alaska with the objective of creating a unified voice among the Inuit of Alaska, Canada, and Greenland to protest the proposed exploitation of oil and gas in the North American Arctic. In 1991, the ICC organized and sponsored the first Arctic Leaders Summit which included representatives of the ICC and the Nordic Sami Council, as well as the Association of the Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia, and Far East of the Russian Federation. The topics discussed included the need for sustainable development of Arctic homelands, the recognition of Aboriginal Rights, the need for new partnerships to address critical issues facing the Arctic regions, and the need for governments to dedicate greater resources towards the needs of indigenous peoples. A second Arctic Leaders Summit was planned and organized by the Nordic Sami Council, and took place in 1995 in Rovaniemi, Finland.[7] These initiatives were only a few of the many that would eventually lead to the creation of the Arctic Council.

Meanwhile, the concept of Aboriginal Rights slowly gained acceptance throughout North America. The first acknowledgement was inherent in the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971, passed by the United States Congress. Then, on 1 May 1979, the Danish government passed the „Commencement Act" approving the introduction of Home Rule in Greenland. In Canada, „existing" Aboriginal Rights were recognized in the Constitution Act of 1982, with various land claims agreements negotiated from 1975 through to the present. The most dramatic achievement was the settlement with the Inuit of the Eastern and Central Arctic, negotiated in conjunction with the creation of a new territory in 1999 - Nunavut -

with an Inuit majority of 80 percent: in essence, a form of democratic self-government. Other land claims and specific rights to self-government have been settled, or are in the process of being settled, among other Inuit groups and northern Indian tribes in Canada. Meanwhile, initiatives were also taking place in Europe, as in the case of Sami Council's efforts to attain recognition of their right to self-determination.[8] By comparison, similar attempts by the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON) were ineffective.[9]

There were also a number of other initiatives which have contributed to a more unified voice on northern concerns. Various transnational, non-governmental agencies emerged during this period, including the Circumpolar Universities Cooperation Association, the International Arctic Science Committee, the International Congress of Arctic Social Sciences, and the International Union for Circumpolar Health, to name only a few. Additionally, a number of government-sponsored agencies were founded, such as the Nordic Council (1972), the Council of the Baltic Sea States (1992), the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (1993), and the Council of Arctic Parliamentarians, as well as a number of committees and sub-committees of the United Nations. Organizations within each circumpolar country also sought collaboration with international scientists - the Arctic System Science Program (ARCSS) of the United States National Science Foundation is one example. Although some initiatives centred on improved economic benefits or advanced educational opportunities, as in the case of the proposed University of the Arctic, the majority seemed to focus on concerns about Arctic pollution, leading to the establishment in 1991 of the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP), and the publication in 1997 of its comprehensive report on the status of Arctic pollution throughout the circumpolar regions.[10] These initiatives also contributed to the creation of the Arctic Council in 1996, which eventually absorbed AMAP and the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy working groups.

The ongoing dialogue among officials of the circumpolar countries is unprecedented, and related research initiatives far more successful than anticipated. Yet the ability to translate the research results into political action has so far been disappointingly lacking. The work of the Arctic Council has also been hindered by less than enthusiastic support from the United States. This reluctance was evident during the negotiations leading to its creation, and was prompted by concern that the Council might be used as an instrument for trying to influence American and NATO defence strategies. Such concerns were legitimate, especially now that quasi-environmental concerns are being raised over the United States' plans to up-grade their anti-ballistic missile defences in the Arctic. As the President of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference has argued, should the interceptors be activated, the nuclear missiles would likely be downed on Inuit lands.[11] Twenty years ago, it would have been considered ludicrous to suggest that the Inuit people be consulted; today their approval of the National Missile Defence (NMD) proposals would seem almost mandatory. Times have changed, and with them, the power and thrust of the East-West dynamic. Without the existence of a military or economic crisis in recent years, southern interests seem to have lost some of the influence they once held over northern residents. At the moment, however, the balance is tenuous. Should the current situation in the Middle East develop into a crisis of major proportions, demands for rapid expansion of Arctic oil and gas production will likely take precedence over environmental concerns. A similar result might occur should there be a direct threat to the peace and security of Europe or North America.

At present, the Arctic Council has no authority to enforce its policies. As a consequence, it must look to the support of representative countries and United Nations agencies to bring about any material change. There are additional difficulties on the horizon. Although the Council has taken a strong stand on the need for environmental protection and sustainable development, these two policies may prove incompatible in certain situations. Similarly, there are other ties which could limit the degree to which the circumpolar nations are able to fulfil the policy directives of the Arctic Council, such as conflicting priorities of members in the Economic Union or of signatories to the North America Free Trade Agreement, to

give two examples.[12] In this regard, the creation of the Arctic Council did not guarantee that all the expectations of the founding states could or would be met.

Some circumpolar nations have shown strong leadership in their support of the basic objectives set forth by the Arctic Council, one of them being Canada as is evident from its recently published document describing its new northern policy. *The Northern Dimension of Canada's Foreign Policy* clearly defines its objectives:

1. to enhance the security and prosperity of Canadians, especially northerners and Aboriginal peoples;
2. to assert and ensure the preservation of Canada's sovereignty in the North;
3. to establish the Circumpolar region as a vibrant geopolitical entity integrated into a rules-based international system; and
4. to promote the human security of northerners and the sustainable development of the Arctic.[13]

Other government departments appear to be developing policy in support of Canada's Foreign Affairs initiative. The Northern Affairs Program, for instance, has issued a publication on its plans for northern research over the next two years, with the stated objective „to ensure that federally funded science and technology continues to improve the quality of life and the environment, social and economic well-being, and the advancement of knowledge in northern Canada."[14] Whether such policy initiatives can be sustained if strongly opposed by American interests cannot be known until they are put to the test; but now that they are published and essentially in the public domain, opposition may be more difficult. Moreover, Canada's northern science policy is also compatible with the documents prepared and approved by the World Conference on Science held in Budapest in June 1999.[15] Canada, like all circumpolar countries, must gain support from world organizations if they are to compete against more powerful economic and military interests.

Policy and research aside, the ability to overcome threats to the well-being, and perhaps even survival, of northern residents is still very much dependent upon the cooperation of southern interests. This was clearly demonstrated by a recent study on dioxin pollution in the Canadian Arctic that linked the sources of contamination to southern Canada, the United States, Mexico, and countries outside North America such as Japan, France, Belgium and the United Kingdom. The study was conducted by the Center for the Biology of Natural Systems at the City University of New York, for the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation. In addition to locating each source as a percentage of the overall pollution, the study identified the main source of dioxins found in the Arctic as coming from „US waste incinerators (municipal and medical), together with cement kilns burning hazardous waste as fuel, and metal processing facilities."[16] As is so often the case, the research effort required to identify the problem may be far less than that needed for finding the means to resolve the problem.

In summary, the primary force behind the East-West dynamic in circumpolar relationships has, historically, been driven by the need to cooperate with others for one's survival - or, failing that, to avoid confrontation by deferring to southern interests. Today, the success of the circumpolar countries in defending their mutual interests is derived from the many cooperative efforts of governmental and non-governmental organizations. This has only been possible because of a prolonged period of economic prosperity and peaceful co-existence between the super powers of the world. Should this balance be disrupted by a major crisis, the current advances in research and policy initiatives may not result in any meaningful action. On the other hand, the strong bonds now established between circumpolar countries will likely make them less vulnerable to the pressures of a rejuvenated South-North dynamic. Similarly, the more closely policy statements of each southern-based government are tied to the interests of its northern peoples, the stronger the unified voice of the circumpolar nations will be in their defence. Even then, we must recognize that the strength of the present East-West dynamic has yet to be tested during a time of economic or military crisis.

Notes

[1] This is in contrast to a „Mercator-based East-West paradigm" as discussed by Paul Dukes of the Centre for Russian East and Central European Studies at the University of Aberdeen, in the „Introduction," James Forsyth et al. *The Return of North-South* (Aberdeen, Scotland: University of Aberdeen, 1997), 5.

[2] For instance, see Magnus Magnusson, *Vikings* (London: Bodley Head, 1980), Ch's. 7 and 8.

[3] For a summary of the history of the indigenous peoples of the circumpolar regions see Richard Vaughan, *The Arctic, A History* (Dover, New Hampshire: Alan Sutton, 1994), 1-34.

[4] Shelagh D. Grant, *Sovereignty or Security? Government Policy in the Canadian North, 1936-1950* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988), 180-85, and Appendix G.

[5] Laurence Gould, *The Polar Regions in Their Relation to Human Affairs,* Bowman Memorial Lecture Series Four (New York: The American Geographical Society, 1958), 10.

[6] Terence Armstrong, George Rogers, and Graham Rowley, *The Circumpolar North* (London: Methuen & Company, 1978), 278.

[7] Mary May Simon, *Inuit: One Future – One Arctic* (Peterborough, Ontario: Cider Press, 1997), 26-27.

[8] Lennard Sillanpaa, *Political and Administrative Responses to Sami Self-Determination* (Helsinki: The Finnish Society of Sciences and Letters, 1994).

[9] James Forsyth, „The Komi People and the Russians," *The Return of North-South, 7.*

[10] *Arctic Pollution Issues: A State of the Arctic Environment Report* (Oslo: Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme, 1997).

[11] Jane George, „Circumpolar Inuit oppose U.S. missile defence system," *Nunatsiaq News,* 28 (11 August 2000), 1-2 and 18.

[12] Mark Nuttall, *Protecting the Arctic: Indigenous Peoples and Cultural Survival* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1998), 69.

[13] Canada, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. *The Northern Dimension of Canada's Foreign Policy* (Ottawa: Communications Bureau, 2000), 2.

[14] Canada, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. *Northern Science and Technology in Canada: Federal Framework and Research Plan, April 1,2000 - March 31, 2002* (Ottawa, Northern Affairs Program, 2000), 4.

[15] World Conference on Science, *Science for the Twenty-first Century: A New Commitment* (Paris: UNESCO, 2000).

[16] North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation, news release „Study links dioxin pollution in Arctic to North American Sources" (New York and Montreal, 3 October 2000).

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The Relevance of History

Gísli Sigurðsson

Our task in this session is to discuss the relevance of history; and there is no shortage of problems and questions confronting us. What do we mean by relevance - and, indeed, what do we mean by history? Do we confine our thoughts to the economic or technological progress of mankind in our contemporary world? And do we limit our notions of history to the time-honoured narratives of school history books, which told of the rise and fall of kings, military leaders and political parties in the Western world over centuries? If this is how we understand history, and if we then reflect on what history can offer our fellow citizens, we may conclude gloomily that the answer is „very little", for all the attraction which famous historical figures and events may exert on the popular consciousness.

But if we take a broader perspective on questions of what is relevant and what is history, different answers may emerge. Everything that can help us to understand ourselves, our own culture and the cultures of others, nature and the environment, and, not least, how these individual elements relate to each other and interact, can surely claim to be relevant for our time. And history certainly offers an abundance of knowledge about these matters - if, that is, we define history in the broadest sense as that discipline which deals with everything that has happened to mankind and nature over the course of time. Rather than asking about the relevance of history we might usefully rephrase the question and ask instead: Is knowledge about ourselves and others important? Is understanding mankind and nature relevant? If we see history in this perspective it seems bound to be relevant, and not just for our own age but for all and any time.

How, we may ask, is history relevant then? At the dawn of history in North-western Europe in the ninth century we see the Vikings sailing out from the misty world of their pre-history, out of Scandinavia and into the neighbouring lands and cultures to the east, south and west, as well as into those uncharted North Atlantic territories previously inhabited chiefly by seagulls and arctic foxes: the Faroe Islands and Iceland, only visited sporadically before by Irish hermits. These same adventurous settlers also encountered uninhabited land in Greenland towards the end of the 10th century, after having farmed for a century and more in Iceland. They settled in Greenland and found there the remains of people similar to those with whom they later had dealings further to the north, west and south, in the land that we now know as North America but which they called Helluland, Markland and, furthest south, Vinland. For the next four or five hundred years they hunted in the high arctic and brought their catches back home to the farm lands of southern Greenland, leaving behind them occasional evidence of many centuries of activity and contact with the Inuits

spread around in the high Canadian arctic - evidence which is now in the process of being discovered by archaeologists. These people who had their homes in Greenland and Iceland also built at least one site further south on the north-westernmost tip of Newfoundland, in L'Anse aux Meadows. This location they used as a stepping stone for a handful of exploratory voyages into the Gulf of St. Lawrence and beyond, in which regions they came into contact with native Indians, some of them hostile, others more commercially interactive and friendly.

These actions were commemorated in stories that were told and retold for centuries on end by oral storytellers until they were set out on parchment in Iceland during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. These texts took the form of sagas about legendary Vikings as well as about more historically authentic kings in Scandinavia, and about those settlers in Iceland who became the heroes of those much praised literary forerunners of the modern historical novel: the *Sagas of Icelanders.* These stories offer us written accounts of how people viewed themselves and others. We learn how they wanted to remember the encounters of their ancestors with the new land that was Iceland; and how they settled that new land, by creating a cultural as well as an agrarian landscape. They assigned names to places associated with known individuals, and they told stories about events that had happened in that landscape, thus adding human history to a land which had hitherto been untouched by any forces save those of nature.

This land can in our times also tell to the geologically literate the story of volcanic eruptions, ice ages, warm periods (much warmer than today), and of the constant process of shaping and reshaping the land and its vegetation brought about by natural phenomena rather than by those forces of modern pollution which we tend to think of as the ultimate engine for change in what we sometimes imagine as the stable nature around us.

The early settlers also told stories or myths which preserve for us an imaginative interpretation of those forces of nature as they appeared to these people. These myths represent attempts to capture natural and uncontrollable forces in story, and to render them in some way a part of their conceptual world, thereby controlling them as narrative art can do.

These events can tell us how Man - with a capital M - views nature, and how he uses his language and culture to enroll nature in his dominion. We can observe how, perhaps mistakenly, he perceives of himself and the gods as the dominant partners in that relationship.

When we follow the Vikings in the other direction, into the already settled lands of Europe, we can observe the meeting and merging of diverse peoples - as opposed to those very different encounters between man and nature in the North Atlantic. Since we in the circumpolar lands live on the fringe, with human cultures to the south and the wilderness to the north, the history of these contacts may serve as a constant reminder of our destiny. These two dimensions of the process of Viking expansion offer us a history not only of warfare, commerce and cultural enrichment but also of new settlement and cultural expansion. Both led to new developments and creativity, the like of which had not been seen before, due to the coalescence of human cultures, as well as to the confrontations of man with nature.

The lesson to be drawn from this aspect of history is that we should keep both frontiers open and try to expand our knowledge in both directions. It should also remind us that every meeting has at least two parties or sides involved. We tend to look at a meeting of cultures as a confrontation where we only hear the story as remembered and told by „our" people. This should also prompt us to reflect on the „discovery" of the arctic regions which were explored, known and utilised for thousands of years on end without „our" knowledge. This finally brings us to the importance of local history and local knowledge about nature and its resources all around the globe.

The importance or relevance of learning about others should also become apparent when we realise that in the past our own people were entirely different from what we are today - and as a consequence we have to treat them as a different culture. They must be under-

stood with the help of an entirely different experience than that which we possess at present. Thus we must learn about others in order to be able to understand our own people, expand our minds and make the most of what the world has to offer us in the way of intellectual and emotional experience which the accumulated cultural knowledge of mankind records for us.

Learning about the past is thus bound to be relevant for modernity at all times because it enriches our lives and helps us to form a mutual understanding between us and others. It can help us to build up a set of values and a way of thinking that is relevant for our modern times. It can enrich the way we deal with people and, at best, it can add a dimension to life of such richness as to render life without that dimension a superficial and futile exercise.

History and knowledge go hand in hand. History is not only what we in this part of the world have seen fit to write down and remember through the ages. History has been preserved in all cultures and it preserves knowledge and understanding of encounters between peoples and between man and his environment. It is important that we can have access to that knowledge and that we can share it with each other, rather than regarding it as the discovery by one of truths which the other knew all the time.

The sharing of knowledge is not unproblematic, however, because of all the little cultural groups we live in, be it our academic disciplines which focus, at times, more on the integrity of the discipline than on the shared scientific goal of seeking knowledge by all possible methods in order to understand our common but manifold human destiny. We may even be secluded in those cultural groups which we call nations. All these barriers are being systematically broken down by activities and enterprises such as the Northern Research Forum.

This forum should thus give us an opportunity to share each others histories and knowledge in order to draw up an holistic picture of the lives lived in the north, the lives of peoples who have met and integrated for centuries but who have always retained their own version of the story to tell to their own folk. But it is in the human and cultural encounter between peoples that new things have happened and developed, where the mind has been able to transcend its boundaries in the pursuit of creative thinking. We can also share knowledge about ways in which we can live with our next door neighbour in the north, without risking our mutual extinction: the wild nature of the arctic which is still more or less governed by the same forces as it was when the Vikings emerged from the mists of the past, even though the terminology with which we describe those forces may have changed somewhat through the ages.