
Northern Manitoba is a unique and fascinating subject for study, quite literally 'another country' separate and distinct from the southern areas of the province. The aboriginal peoples of the north are culturally different from their cousins in the south and have lived a very different history. The early development of the fur trade meant that the European presence in the north predated by more than a century the arrival of the whites in the south. Northern communities like Norway House were important administrative centres long before the establishment of white communities on the prairie.

At the same time, there is a pioneer spirit in the north, especially in the resource towns like Thompson and Flin Flon where the first clearing of the bush is still a living memory. Many aboriginal communities also seem new and future-oriented because, although the people have lived in the area for a very long time, the proportion of children and young people in the population is very high.

Richard Enns’s bibliography provides scholars and general readers with a guide to published information about this fascinating region, and fills a major gap in the bibliography of Canada’s north. The bibliography is actually a compilation of three earlier works, all done for the Historic Resources Branch of the Manitoba Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship. For reasons of lack of funding and changing priorities, the Branch was never able to publish these bibliographies, although they exist in manuscript form in the files of that organization. The Branch was able to participate in the funding of Enns’s bibliography, along with the University of Manitoba, through its Outreach Fund. Bruce Donaldson of the Historic Resources Branch and Professor Jean Friesen of the University of Manitoba served as advisors for the project.

Enns is well qualified to prepare such a bibliography. He is a graduate of the University of Manitoba in history and wrote a master’s level thesis on the fur trade at Norway House. His own research has thus enabled him to develop expertise concerning the sources for the study of northern Manitoba.
The three precursor bibliographies to Enns's work are: 'Selected Bibliography of the Hudson's Bay Lowlands' by Gaye-Ellen Clarke, 'Selected Bibliography of Documentary Sources on the Western Northlands Area, Being That Portion of the Province of Manitoba Located North of 51' by Henry Trachtenberg, and 'A Bibliography of the Non-Agricultural Areas in Manitoba.' Enns has included all the material cited in these works, brought them up to date, and added older references not included in the originals.

The bibliography deals with Manitoba north of the fifty-third parallel for the western part of the province and, for the area east of Lake Winnipeg, north of the fifty-first parallel. The items included are published books and articles which deal with this geographic area. Unpublished theses and pamphlets are also included if they are 'accessible.'

Following a short preface, the work is divided into seven broad subject categories: bibliographies; the fur trade; aboriginal and Métis populations; exploration and travel accounts; church and mission histories; northern geography and resources; and community histories and resource exploitation. Each section contains separate lists of bibliographies and research aids, books, periodical articles, theses and dissertations, and unpublished papers, reports, and studies.

In his preface, Enns states that his bibliography is a 'working document' for the practical use of those interested in the north. He freely admits that he has probably missed publications and asks that his readers bring these to his attention.

The citations to published materials and to theses and dissertations are standard and sufficient to enable the reader to locate the item. In the case of unpublished reports and studies, very few citations give any indication of where the item might be available. In the case of projects done for the Historic Resources Branch, the reader assumes that the paper will be available through the Branch, although I was unable to find this actually stated anywhere in the preface. In the case of other papers cited, there is less hope of locating the material.

Short annotations would also have been useful, especially in the case of the unpublished papers. As well, although the broad subject categories constitute a basic kind of index, full author and subject indices would have improved the usefulness of the bibliography. Failing this, the division of the various subsections into time periods would have been helpful. As it stands, citations to materials from the nineteenth century are interspersed with books and articles from the 1980s in lists arranged alphabetically by author's name.

These problems, however, are minor ones and do not detract from the usefulness of A Bibliography of Northern Manitoba, which will no doubt become an essential tool for anyone pursuing research on the subject.

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