

Nunavik: Inuit-Controlled Education in Arctic Quebec.

Ann Vick-Westgate. Calgary, AB: University of Calgary Press, 2002, 357 pages

Reviewed by: *Geraldine Balzer*
University of Saskatchewan

Ann Vick-Westgate's history of education in Arctic Quebec presents a thoroughly researched and fascinating look at the evolution of education in one of Canada's most remote regions. Current interest in Aboriginal issues and local control of education make this a timely and much needed addition to the existing body of research in Aboriginal education and education history. Frequently Arctic Canada and the history and concerns of the Inuit are overlooked in Canadian academia, and this book begins to fill that hole.

Vick-Westgate, although not Canadian or Aboriginal, has a long history of involvement with Aboriginal education in South Dakota, Alaska, and Sami areas of Scandinavia. She is particularly interested in the culture of school and the inherent difficulties with changing that culture. Vick-Westgate has been involved with the history of education in Nunavik since 1990 when she was asked to write a report based on the work of a task force assessing the Nunavik education system. This book grew out of that work and was written with four specific reasons:

- To have a record for the region's people, particularly those who will continue the process;
- To identify the political, economic, and social forces encouraging the growth of local control of education in Northern Quebec during the last 25 years as well as those forces impeding that development;
- To document the respective roles of the federal and provincial governments, regional Inuit organization, and communities in shaping educational policy during the same period; and
- To establish the critical junctures and events at which decisions were made impacting local control of education. (pp. xiv-xv)

Although Vick-Westgate's purpose was to document the last 25 years of education and the move toward Inuit control of education, her book introduces the reader to this remote area of Canada and provides the physical and political geography necessary to understand the current history. Maps locate the region geographically and photos give us visual images of Nunavik throughout contact history. Throughout the book Vick-Westgate incorporates the voices of the participants through extended quotations and excerpts from documents. The appendices form a major portion of the book and provide necessary historical detail and access to a comprehensive range of pertinent documents. For those readers with little knowledge of Nunavik, community profiles provide a snapshot of the history and geography of each settlement. This attention to detail

Geraldine Balzer is currently an interdisciplinary doctoral candidate in the disciplines of English and curriculum studies. Before returning to university she spent 14 years as an educator in Inuit settlements in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. Her doctoral research focuses on the teaching of Aboriginal literature in the secondary classroom.

makes the book accessible to an audience with little previous knowledge of northern Quebec and Inuit education.

Vick-Westgate encapsulates the history of Nunavik in the second chapter of the book and then uses subsequent chapters to further delve into the history with specific reference to education. The third chapter considers the effects of European contact on traditional education, and the fourth chapter focuses on the move toward local control precipitated by the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement.

The James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement set the stage for Inuit control of education, and in 1978 the Kativik School Board (KSB) was created. As the first Inuit-controlled board in Canada, KSB became the model for boards in the Northwest Territories and elsewhere. By 1985 the need for a review into education was noted, and a symposium on education was held. This symposium involved educators, politicians, parents, and students and resulted in a series of recommendations, culminating in the creation of a task force to examine and re-vision education. In 1989 the task force was launched and for the next two years its members listened to the voices of community members and educators as they developed a critique of the current system and recommendations for the future. Needless to say, this process was fraught with difficulty and dissension as entrenched opinion met entrenched opinion, and the need for change, although recognized, was not embraced. In the final report, released in 1992, the task force members present these conclusions.

The education system in Nunavik should be restructured and refocused to make it work for us, to ensure that it prepares us to handle the problems and opportunities of living that we actually face—not just the ones that school board has been mechanically structured to deal with. We are not asking someone else to create this system for us. Creating it ourselves is a necessary step to self-government in Nunavik. Self-government and education go hand in hand just as independence goes with wisdom. The restructuring of our education system in Nunavik is part of our learning and development as a people. There are many challenges ahead of us, but we have many advantages. We are small in number and are not burdened by a heavy load of inflexible institutions. We have the potential to be world leaders in education, not for the recognition, but because it is in us to do. (p. 236)

The final chapter of this work considers Indigenous models for education change and asks, "If we were to start from scratch, what would school look like?" (p. 240). The resilience of the Inuit and their ability to reshape the Western forms imposed on them is highlighted, and the tools necessary to complete the journey to Inuit-control are identified. Vick-Westgate concludes by suggesting how Indigenous models of education could potentially affect Western schooling, ideas that are well worth considering as educational reforms are pondered in other contexts.

The next chapter in the history of Inuit-controlled education in Nunavik remains to be written. However, Vick-Westgate has given us a thorough study of education in this region and has challenged us to reconsider existing models of education in the light of the Nunavik experience. Those interested in Aboriginal education, the history of education, and the decolonization of education will find that this work provides a comprehensive and insightful look at

education in one region of Canada and provides important connections to school reform in other regions.

Learning Through Experience: Troubling Orthodoxies and Intersecting Questions. Tara J. Fenwick. Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing, 2003, 213 pages.

Reviewed by: *Patricia Gouthro*
Mount Saint Vincent University

In this book Fenwick takes up a challenging task as she proposes to organize the literature on experiential learning into five general groupings. Systematically, she takes up each of these categories of learning and considers how these can be used to grasp the theoretical underpinnings of various educators who draw on experiential learning in their work. She assesses some of the strengths and criticisms of each perspective so that educators in each theoretical framework might be understood better and considers some of the pedagogical approaches that might be used in the context of these varying approaches.

In her preface Fenwick indicates that the book is designed primarily as an introduction to novices in the adult education field, so she is careful to explain concepts and does not assume the reader has a basic familiarity with the theorists who have been read widely in adult education (i.e., Freire, Mezirow). At the same time, her book might be of interest to those more established in the field of adult education and lifelong learning who are interested in broadening the scope of their perspective on experiential learning by being introduced to alternative frameworks on learning (i.e., communities of practice, ecological and environmental perspectives).

Fenwick begins with an overview in which she discusses five dimensions of experiential learning: purpose, interpretation, engagement, self, and context. She notes the complexity of each of these characteristics. For example, the *purpose* of learning may not always be readily apparent even to the learner. Psychanalytic theorists would argue "that ongoing psychic activity in our unconscious repulses or attracts us to particular knowledge" (p. 14). Through *interpretation*, "we actually *produce* our experiences because, among all the complex and contradictory dimensions in a given event, we are highly selective in what we notice and highlight" (p. 15). Our *engagement* in learning may be affected by our desires, level of participation, and our positionality. Understanding the connection between *self* and experiential learning is problematic as some theorists challenge the notion of a unitary sense of self. From a poststructural perspective, Fenwick notes that Foucault (1988) uses "the term *subject*, maintaining that what we think of as the self in fact is produced in a web of social practices and language" (p. 17). The *context* that shapes our learning experiences "includes historical location and meanings of an activity, its geographical space and movement, as well as its cultural meanings and

Patricia Gouthro is an assistant professor interested in critical, feminist, and cross-cultural theory and pedagogy. She can be reached at patricia.gouthro@msvu.ca.