

## Compte rendu

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par Judith Kleinfeld

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JENNINGS, Michael

2004 *Alaska Native Political Leadership and Higher Education*, Walnut Creek, AltaMira Press, 185 pages.

The argument of this book is that “despite a powerful and influential [Native] leadership, even when funding was forthcoming, and even when the University of Alaska agreed to provide some of the requested services, the university’s programs persistently failed to meet Native needs, and the institution persisted in a case of institutional racism” (p. 3). Using open-ended questions, Jennings interviewed prominent Native leaders from the 1970s and 1980s. He offers a detailed account of the educational goals of the Native leadership during this period and of the University of Alaska’s institutional responses. He describes as well the Alaska Native Studies program at the University of Alaska Anchorage, which he directed for two years, pointing out its growth in enrollment despite its problems in obtaining financial, administrative, and philosophical support.

The struggle over Chukchi Community College, located in the rural community of Kotzebue in northwestern Alaska, illustrates the types of problems Jennings highlights. The college received capital funding for a new building in 1978, and the Native leadership was concerned with 1) local control of the educational services, 2) the offering of practical courses such as land management instead of the general educational requirements offered in urban community colleges, and 3) the governance of the community college system from a unit headquartered in Anchorage. The Kotzebue legislators attempted to remove Chukchi from the control of the university and place it under the control of the Northwest Arctic School District. The struggle was resolved through private negotiations and a compromise with the Native leadership. The outcome of the negotiations was that the university agreed to establish a vocational/technical school in Kotzebue under the auspices of the Northwest Arctic School District; to increase its system of satellite communications by adding at least 22 new sites in rural Alaska; to establish a Rural Alaska Honors Institute for rural Native youth; and to increase the services for Native students at the Fairbanks campus. However, the demands of the Native leadership for a Native administrator with responsibility for rural education at the highest level of the university system was not achieved. Rather, the Chukchi Community College was administered by an Executive at the urban campus of the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

*Alaska Native Leadership and Higher Education* provides a fascinating inside account of the views of the Native leadership in the 1970s and 1980s toward the University of Alaska. This account, as Jennings himself points out, is almost entirely critical and unfavourable. Jennings endeavours to show that what outsiders might view as “contributions and successes” were in fact achieved by great political struggle in the context of “systemic racism and cultural conflict.”

As a faculty member of the University of Alaska Fairbanks for more than 30 years and as a colleague and friend of Michael Jennings, I find this account at variance for a history which could be told alternatively as a triumphal account of institutional change. The University of Alaska Fairbanks in 2006 has a highly respected Alaska Native

Executive Dean in charge of the College of Rural and Community Development. This college offers programs in Rural Development responsive to the agenda of Native political leaders, including “Community Business and Economic Development; Community Research and Indigenous Knowledge; Land Resources and Environmental Management; Rural Health and Human Services Management; and Tribal and Local Government Administration.” *Alaska Native Political Leadership and Higher Education* omits these programs and thus offers no account of the role of the Alaska Native leadership or any other influences on their development. Nor does the book describe the development of an array of other programs offering social support and tutorial services to Alaska Native students, such as the Rural Student Services program at the Fairbanks campus. Nor does it consider the way many other programs at the University of Alaska, such as those in psychology, education, and social work, include rural issues and incorporate indigenous points of view. Nonetheless, the book is valuable for the insight it provides into a puzzle to outsiders—the bitterness of some Alaska Native leaders prominent in the 1970s and 1980s toward an institution that in the 21st century might be seen as a model of responsiveness to the needs of Alaska Native students and rural regions.

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LAUGRAND, Frédéric

2002 *Mourir et renâître. La réception du christianisme par les Inuit de l'Arctique de l'Est canadien (1890-1940)*, Québec, Les Presses de l'Université Laval, Collection Religions, cultures et sociétés, 560 pages.

Écrit par Frédéric Laugrand, professeur au département d'anthropologie de l'Université Laval, cet ouvrage est la version remaniée de sa thèse de doctorat. Bien que l'analyse soit destinée aux chercheurs, le propos et sa présentation sauront plaire à un lectorat non universitaire. L'accès à un large public est d'ailleurs un des objectifs de la collection *Religions, cultures et sociétés* dans lequel le livre est publié.

Laugrand énonce clairement l'objectif de l'ouvrage dans l'introduction. Avec cette étude ethnohistorique axée sur la conversion et la christianisation, l'auteur souhaite «caractériser plus adéquatement les facettes [du] processus de réception du christianisme» (p. 4) par les Inuit de la Terre de Baffin entre 1890 et 1940. Il déborde toutefois quelque peu du cadre géographique annoncé puisque le nomadisme inuit entraîne inévitablement l'analyse vers le Nunavik et certaines régions du Keewatin. Laugrand s'interroge sur ce qui a bien pu se passer entre 1890 et 1934 pour que les Inuit, jugés «inconvertissables» par des missionnaires qui se rendirent dans le Nord en 1865 et 1890, se convertissent aussi rapidement. Ces sociétés nomades qui pratiquaient