Jim Mochoruk, Formidable Heritage--Manitoba's North and the Cost of Development 1870 to 1930

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Main content

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Historian W. L. Morton argued in The Canadian identity (1961) that the Canadian shield had made an indelible mark on the Canadian psyche and that "the main task of Canadian life has been to make something of this formidable heritage." (1) Morton also contended that the challenge posed by the economic development of the North shaped Manitoba's provincial character. In his work, Morton constructed a vision of the North in which the development of natural resource industries was an integral component of Manitoba's identity. In the introduction to his book Formidable Heritage, James Mochoruk admits that he has been strongly influenced by Morton's ideas about the north. However, he takes Morton's ideas further by asking an essential question: What was the impact of the development and exploitation of the natural resources of northern Manitoba on the people who lived in the region? In other words, Mochoruk wants to explore the "cost of development" in political, ecological, and socio-economic terms.

Whereas W. L. Morton asserted that development was essentially beneficial, Mochoruk challenges this assumption in the introduction by offering a strong central thesis:

"When all of Manitoba was given in 1670, sight unseen, to a group of entrepreneurs whose primary goal was to exploit the natural resources of the region, a precedent was set that would be replicated all too many times in Manitoba's history, for this grant was both careless and callous in regard to...

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