

# Foreword

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This issue of ANTHROPOLOGICA is devoted to a dialogue between social scientists and journalists on the topic of native North Americans and the media. Seven of the authors are either practicing journalists or have worked in journalism, while the remaining authors are engaged in research which addresses the effects of the mass media on native North Americans. Most of the papers in this volume by journalists document the activities of mass-media organizations or other projects that were established by native North Americans to assert their own identity, to create modern communications networks, and to voice their own concerns and views. The papers by anthropologists and scholars in related disciplines deal with topics such as native art or bilingualism which are directly relevant to native journalism.

The transformation of traditional cultures as a result of the recent communications revolution may eventually lead to the extinction of traditional cultures. One of the only effective means of survival for such cultures is to take full advantage of the modern mass media and to use these media as a source of symbolic production. All of the papers in this volume address aspects of this general problem, which is particularly acute in Canada. Three underlying themes can be found in the papers: (1) the contemporary threat to the survival of traditional cultures; (2) the attempt to resist cultural extinction by assimilating information technology; and (3) the difficulty of successfully resisting cultural extinction due to both the strength of competition from dominant cultures, and organizational problems which hinder the native media as an enterprise.

Although the assimilation of information technology by traditional cultures is a topic of interest to anthropologists, sociologists, and other social scientists, this topic cannot be investigated properly without the input of journalists. The reason for this is that journalists are in the best position to provide a precise and concrete insiders' view of the functioning of media organizations. Although native participation as professional journalists in the mass media can be traced back to the 1820s (see the article by Sharon Murphy in this issue titled "Native Print Journalism in the United States: Dreams and Realities"), the experiences and views of native journalists have received surprisingly little attention from social scientists.

The opening article by Robin Ridington describes his extensive research in creating audio documentaries of the reserve "soundscape" of the Beaver Indians in British Columbia. Ridington recounts historical changes in the Beaver Indian soundscape from the noises which are characteristic of a hunting and gathering society to the typical sounds of industrialism. Numerous suggestions are given regarding techniques for collecting "taken-for-granted" sounds. Not only are such

sounds a rich source of ethnographic documentation, but the recording procedures are also of practical use to broadcast journalists.

Sharon Murphy and her late husband James Murphy co-authored an authoritative study of native journalism, *Let My People Know: American Indian Journalism, 1828-1978* (1981). Murphy's contribution to this issue provides an overview of her research, including discussions of historical and contemporary native publications. Her statement about the unique educational role of nineteenth-century native newspapers in furthering Indian survival within a society dominated by European ethnic groups is equally applicable to today's mass media. Murphy also makes it clear that the characteristics of organizations which produce native publications have remained remarkably similar over the years. As was the case fifty or seventy-five years ago, most contemporary native publications have minimal staffs and resources. In light of this, Murphy's optimism about the future of native print journalism is especially noteworthy.

Joël Demay contrasts two approaches to journalism. The first approach is a widely-held professional ideal in North America, and is characterized as objective, impersonal, and politically neutral. Demay claims that the opposite journalistic position, which is critical, personal, and politically committed, is more appropriate for native journalism because it corresponds to the self-respect and self-accomplishment which is a part of traditional Indian education. He also suggests that native journalists pay particular attention to expressions of the latter perspective in publications from the Third World.

Stephen Riggins outlines the organizational structure and operating environment of a typical native Canadian newspaper, the *Toronto Native Times (TNT)*. This newspaper was published between 1968 and 1981, and was generally run by amateur journalists. As the only public voice for the local native community in the city of Toronto, Ontario, the *TNT* was chronically underfunded and had ill-defined goals. Riggins' analysis shows how the continual existence of systematic barriers has prevented the native press from being of greater assistance in reinforcing a collective identity and in asserting material and symbolic interests.

One of the highlights of the paper by Robert Rupert in this issue is his description of "trail" and "community" radio in the Canadian North. Listeners to community radio stations in northern native settlements participate more directly in programs than is typical for the commercial stations familiar to most Canadians. Rupert sees community radio stations as providing the model for future developments in native broadcasting. As the author of a report on native communications which was undertaken in 1981-1982 on behalf of the Canadian Secretary of State, Robert Rupert is well qualified to judge the professional standards of native broadcasting. His frank discussion of the technical weaknesses of a of a great deal of native programing is especially significant.

Kim Kopola is a native broadcast journalist who hosts and produces a weekly half-hour television program on native Canadian affairs which originates in Edmonton, Alberta. During an interview by Carl Urion, Kopola gives a personal account of several of the themes which also appear in Robert Rupert's article. The name of Kopola's show, "Between Two Worlds," conveys the viewpoint that native

life in Canada presently combines aspects of traditional cultures with a larger, technologically-advanced society. Kopola sees this as advantageous, and makes the point that contemporary native people are participating in all aspects of Canadian life. Her program might be seen as typical of a category of public service programs created by television stations which are not specifically required to offer minority programming.

In the 1970s, television was introduced into the Canadian North via satellite technology. Since its arrival, the Canadian Inuit have joined the ranks of the nation's most ardent television viewers. In an article analyzing the impact of television on the Inuit, Gail Valaskakis and Thomas Wilson report the results of their survey of Inuit television preferences. In the process, Valaskakis and Wilson document the most popular programs broadcast by both the Canadian and Inuit Broadcasting Corporations. Their research illustrates Robert Rupert's observations regarding native preferences for superficial mass culture, against which serious native programming must compete. This research also illustrates the observations of Prattis and Chartrand (see below) about the difficulties of preserving minority languages in view of English-language domination of the Canadian media.

Iain Prattis and Jean-Philippe Chartrand review the sociological and anthropological literature on bilingualism and conclude that bilingualism has obvious educational advantages for children in terms of cognitive flexibility and creativity. Due to the extent to which the mass media penetrate homes, bilingualism in the media is the key to the survival of minority languages. Native journalists may not realize the competitive advantages of bilingualism, or the manner in which language, identity, and culture are interrelated. Prattis and Chartrand also comment on the crucial role which the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation can play in preserving the Inuit language, especially through expanded children's programming.

Writing as an employee of the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation (IBC), Debbie Brisebois records the activities of the IBC and its production of television programs in the Inuktitut language since 1982. Her article supports Prattis and Chartrand's assertion that the Inuit want educational material and community discussions of public and local issues which reflect Inuit philosophy and culture. Since the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation is able to broadcast only one hour of programming each day, Brisebois documents the kinds of organizational problems facing native journalists which are also described by other authors in this volume.

The concluding article in this issue by Valda Blundell and Ruth Phillips describes mass media stereotyping in newspaper reviews of native art exhibitions in Canada. These reviews characteristically present a style of contemporary Ojibwa art known as the Woodland School as either the last flowering of dying "primitive" traditionalism, or as a conscious revival of this traditionalism. In addition, non-native reviewers tend to be insensitive to the ways native art combines Ojibwa sources and contemporary European influences to make innovative statements about present social and environmental conditions. Throughout their analysis, Blundell and Phillips provide a highly persuasive argument for the necessity of native-controlled media. Although this idea is implicit in all of the articles

in this volume, Blundell and Phillips provide what is perhaps the most detailed and convincing illustration of the misinterpretation, misclassification, and superficial treatment which native North Americans receive in the mass media.

It is hoped that this collection of papers will contribute to social science awareness of the role of the native media in an increasingly multicultural society. The native North American media is indeed a rich, though generally overlooked source of information on a wide variety of topics of interest to social scientists, policy makers, and the general public.

## NOTES

*Acknowledgements.* As guest editor of this special issue, I would like to thank ANTHROPOLOGICA'S editor-in-chief, Dr. Kathryn Molohon, for the exceptional assistance she has given me in editing this volume. When responsibility for the editorship of ANTHROPOLOGICA was transferred from Université Saint Paul in Ottawa to Laurentian University in Sudbury, Ontario, the journal had not appeared for approximately two years. Dr. Molohon chose to complete back volumes rather than to start anew with 1985. Although this issue is dated 1983, some of the articles deal with time-bound topics, and it should be noted that the issue was actually completed in 1985.

## REFERENCES CITED

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