Sherrill Grace, F.R.S.C.
UBC Killam Lecture, 2008
In Honour of Robert Wyman

The True North Strong and Free:
War, the Arts, and the Canadian North

I: The True North: Background and Context

My title, as you will recognize, comes from Canada's national anthem. Every time Canadians sing this anthem we pledge our commitment to stand on guard for freedom in the *North*, by which we mean Canada itself, or Canada-as-North. However, today I am using the term North more specifically to refer to Canadian territory north of 60 because I want to focus on a rather different, albeit connected, subject from my book *Canada and the Idea of North*. Yukon, the NWT, Nunavut, and the Arctic are areas of the country [**Slide 2—map**] that are coming under close scrutiny in Canada these days, and one of the main reasons for this heightened attention is climate change. The so-called "global warming" that is causing rapid loss of ice across northern regions is opening up the fabled Northwest Passage, and this opening is bringing with it renewed debates over sovereignty in the Arctic (see Boychuk, Brewster, Coates, Cole, and Honderich). **[Slide 3]** Whether we like it or not (I for one do not), the rhetoric surrounding the phenomena of climate change in the Arctic and of international disputes over sovereignty **[Slide 4]** is often phrased in military terms that conjure up spectres of a highly militarized war zone emerging in the circumpolar world as nations fight over the territory, natural resources, and transportation routes becoming accessible as climate change increases. **[Slide 5]** Shocking or worrisome as these developments may seem to most Canadians, military activities in the North are not new, but too few Canadians know the history of arms in the

North—in part because too few Canadians know their history in general and their northern history in particular, and partly because these activities have largely been kept secret, or very carefully censored, by consecutive governments.

While I cannot explore in detail the wider context of 20th century precedents for military activities in the Canadian North, let alone the complex political and legal issues that surround current debates, I do want to set the stage, as it were, for what I as a humanist can do with this subject. In a moment I will focus on a recent Canadian play by Marie Clements called *Burning Vision*, which deals with the mining of uranium during WWII and is primarily set in the NWT on the shores of Great Bear Lake. **[Slide 6 map showing GBL)** I have chosen to discuss this play for several reasons: to be sure, it is a very powerful piece of theatre; it also dramatizes a little known part of northern Canadian history; but most important of all, it addresses present concerns about secret or overt military activities in the North and some of the long term risks and consequences of such activity. *Burning Vision* is a parable for *our* times as much as it is a history lesson or an award-winning play. I have also chosen this play because it provides me with an excellent *entré* into a new phase in my own research—the study of Canadian representations of the two world wars in theatre, fiction, visual art, and film. While much of my ***new*** research will involve discussion of literature and art that have no connection with the North as such, I am impressed by the number of very recent creative works that are linking the subject of war with Canada's North. *Burning Vision* is by no means the only example of how artists in Canada (and around the world) are visiting—or re-visiting—the North.

Indeed, I have just recently learned about a British arts project called "Cape Farewell—The cultural response to climate change." **[Slide 7]** "Cape Farewell" was created by artist David Buckland in 2001 with financial support from the Arts Council England, The Bromley Trust, Toshiba, and other groups, and it has toured its exhibitions in England, Germany, Spain, and Japan. The philosophy behind the project is simple yet profound: that artists can and do create "compelling art, words and music . . . to inspire a response to this cultural challenge" of climate change. To date some very famous British artists have participated—such as novelist Ian McEwan (*The Atonement*)—and as I speak Canadian artists are gathering with the "Cape Farewell" leaders and other international participants in Toronto to prepare for the 2008 expedition. In a week's time, the first expedition to originate in Canada will set forth *with 16 high school students* for Iceland, Greenland, and Baffin Island on board a Russian ship. Clearly, the "Cape Farewell" people believe, as do I, that the arts play a very important role in educating everyone about the circumpolar North and its importance for all our lives.

But my subject is Canada's North and Canadian artists' responses to our North in the context of war, so let me take a step back for a longer view of some of the issues and a few of the key moments in the history of military activity in Canada's North. Challenges to Canadian sovereignty in the North are not new. One of the first arose during the great Klondike Gold Rush in the Yukon during the late 1890s (see Berton and Coates) because the great majority of miners flooding into the North were American, and the Canadian government in Ottawa had not established a policing, legal, or administrative presence in this far distant corner of the country. A crisis rapidly developed from this influx of men, and the NWMP was sent north to establish law and

order and wave the Canadian flag in prominent and strategic places. At stake were Canadian sovereignty and resources—gold—but as Ken Coates recently noted in "The Great Canadian Sovereignty Charade" [**Slide 8**]: in response to that "American invasion," Canada "made them respect the Sabbath and keep handguns out of Dawson City [but] they got most of the gold" (57). Coates is an historian and a specialist in northern history; his central message is that Canadians need to know their northern history in order to respond appropriately (and in a timely manner) to 21st century challenges. And when I turn to the artists I find that they have a track record for telling and re-telling stories about the Klondike. In *Canada and the Idea of North* I touched upon some of the contemporary literature, from the 1890s, and some of the early 20th century popular attention paid to the Klondike through the poetry of Robert Service, the radio program "Men in Scarlet," and the more famous program *Sergeant Preston of the Yukon* **[Slide 9}** which moved from radio to television in the 1950s and is now on video.

More recently, a major novel and an interesting play have appeared that re-tell and re-cite the Klondike past for 21st-century readers and audiences: *The Man from the Creeks* by Robert Kroetsch and *Wanted* by Sally Clark. In *The Man from the Creeks*, Kroetsch picks up on Robert Service's famous poem, "The Shooting of Dan McGrew" (which gives him his title), but then goes on to radically revise the story of who did what during the Gold Rush and why what happened matters. The dust-jacket to the first edition of the novel [**Slide 10]** reproduced an iconic archival photograph of American miners climbing the Chilkoot Pass from the west coast on their way inland and north to the gold fields, and as you can see the miners were men. Kroetsch's hero, however, is a woman—the woman known as "Lou" in Service's poem—and his story recuperates what

was a masculine, American frontier saga into a feminine, Canadian narrative of "home and native land." Moreover, Kroetsch's Klondike symbolizes the mother-lode of Canadian identity buried deep in the permafrost of northern story-telling and myth. Clark's *Wanted* also begins with history and actual historical figures and events, but like Kroetsch, Clark pushes a woman to centre stage and has her female hero stay in the North and make it home rather than grabbing the gold and getting out to the South. Without resorting to flag-waving or military muscle-flexing, both writers imagine a Klondike story as integral to the Canadian narrative of nation; each stakes an imaginative claim to the North as if in response to Rudy Wiebe's insistence in *Playing Dead* that Canadians must accept the fact that they are northerners or to Canadian geographer Louis-Édmond Hamelin's exhortation: "it's your north too."

Stories about the Great War have found particular favour with Canadian authors over the past decade, from Jack Hodgins' magnificent novel *Broken Ground* (1998) or Jane Urquhart's *The Stone Carvers* (2001) to R.H. Thomson's play *The Lost Boys* (2002) and Vern Thiessen's *Vimy* (2008). Each of these works, and many others I might name, is telling a national story about Canadian identity forged through war, but of particular interest to me in my present context are three works that link WWI with the North: Michael Poole's *Rain Before Morning* (2006) about anglophone draft dodgers hiding from the military police in remote spots along the northern British Columbia coast; Mary Lawson's *The Far Side of the Bridge* (2006), which is set in northern Ontario and represents the North as a refuge from both war and the corrupting influence of southern cities; and Joseph Boyden's remarkable novel *Three Day Road* (2005). *Three Day Road* focusses on the history of First Nations soldiers in WWI and draws on the life-story of

one decorated Ojibwa soldier in particular (see Hayes): Corporal Francis Pegahmagabow [**Slide 11**]. Scenes of battle trauma and horror are only one part of this narrative, however. The other part, which provides the moral and spiritual reprieve and salvation for the soldier who survives to come home, takes place in the North. The entire story unfolds as a type of dialogue, or communion, between the severely wounded, morphine-addicted sniper Xavier and his only living relative, his aunt Niska. It is Niska who meets her nephew's train and, grasping the gravity of his condition, takes him north to save both his life and his spirit: **[Slide 12]**

> I feel better once he is in the canoe and we are paddling away from the town. . . . I tell Xavier to lie back on his pack and rest, that we are heading north and I have the current with me. . . . Now paddling home I have the luxury of the current that runs north with me to the Great Salt Bay, to the place the ones who took my nephew call Hudson Bay. . . . the river is a three-day paddle home. (7-8)

North in each of these novels is an imagined site of peace, sanity, freedom, and refuge from southern Canadian/European conflicts. To varying degrees, these novels suggest that North is also Canadians' spiritual home.

II: Protecting the North during WWII [Slide 13: texts, Alaska Hwy, Canol Road]

Not surprisingly, when one looks a little further, this very recent connection of the North with war is not without precedent. Unlike WWI, WWII has both a strong historical and cultural presence in the North, and historians like Shelagh Grant date the start of significant militarization of the Canadian North from this time. The indices of this military activity span the country from east to west, from the building of an American

bomber base at Goose Bay, Labrador in 1942 (where atomic weapons were stored in secret; see Burns), to the building of the Alaska Highway and the Canol Road in the Yukon (see Coates and Grant). The Labrador site was intended to protect North America from the Germans and then the Russians; the routes through the Yukon were built to move men and supplies to the Pacific Northwest to protect against perceived threats from Japan. That these strategic constructions were carried out by the American military on Canadian soil with Canadian permission is an ironic yet important part of the northern militarization story. The DEW Line (Distant Early Warning) system that eventually crossed the Canadian Arctic was completed in 1957; it was the third radar-warning line to span North America (the second to run across Canada) and it was a logical extension into the Cold War period of wartime rhetoric, paranoia and propaganda.[1] At the time it seemed if not prudent, then unavoidable, to relegate Canadian sovereignty to a perceived need to guard against the fear, if not the fact, of invasion from the North—invasion by Germans, Japanese, or Russians who intended to reach the United States by slipping (or later aiming long range missiles) across the then longest, unprotected, international border in the world: the 49th parallel.

One of the most striking examples of art in the service of war propaganda in the Canadian North was the 1941 film called *The 49th Parallel*.[2] Few people recall this movie today, but it represents a powerful recruitment of the arts and artists to serve the war effort. The film was a British production, shot on location at several sites in Canada and in studios in England. It starred famous leading men of the day: Lawrence Olivier in the role of a French-Canadian trapper; Anton Walbrook (who you might remember from *The Red Shoes*) as the leader of a German Hutterite colony in northern Manitoba, Leslie

Howard as a cultured scholar carrying out research in the Rockies, and last but not least Canadian actor Raymond Massey as the down-to-earth, unarmed Canuck, Andy Brock, who captures the vicious Nazi in the final scene, just before he gets across the border into the United States. Lieutenant Hirth (played by Eric Portman), the fanatical Nazi, leads a small landing party of Germans who have taken their U-boat up to Hudson Bay from where they plan to infiltrate North America. But their plan miscarries when the RCAF finds the sub and destroys it. The gang of Nazis is now stranded in the Arctic and forced to make their way south by thuggery, brutality, and their wits. They begin by occupying a remote HBC post at Cape Wolstenholme, murdering its occupants and many hapless "Eskimos," then hijacking a plane, which gets them as far as Churchill before crashing. By foot they happen next upon a remote Hutterite community and, believing they can convert these German brothers, Hirth lectures them on the wonders of the Fuhrer. The Hutterites are appalled, and even though they face internment as enemy aliens within Canada, their leader replies to Hirth by extolling the freedom of Canada and repudiating the Nazis. The small group of Nazis dwindles as one after another dies or is executed, and the plot unravels quickly when the remaining three men make it south to the Rockies, where one is arrested (the eyes of vigilant Canadian Mounties are everywhere) and another disappears. Hirth then travels east alone by riding the rods, until his capture north of the 49th parallel by the resourceful Canuck. The moral of this tale hardly needs emphasizing and today the film seems almost hilarious. And yet, judging from items on the radio and television news today, in the newspapers, and in major periodicals, fears about lack of security, debates about sovereignty, and conflicts over resources, together

with headlines about enemies, or would be terrorists, lurking amongst us, are once more converging on the North.

In a lighter vein, is another form of wartime propaganda—this time thoroughly home-grown: the world of WWII comic book heroes. These Canadian supermen and women were the product of wartime import laws and paper shortages, plus a need for a form of propaganda that would reach a large, and young, audience. Although in most cases they did not last long past the end of the war, these comics were popular, they were all connected in some way with the North, and they merged with the New Triumph Comics Northguard series that debuted new superheroes during the 1970s and 1980s. Known as "Guardians of the North," these figures had names like "Captain Canada," "Captain Canuck," and "Fleur de Lys." My favorites, however, are those created during the war: "Dixon of the Mounted," "Johnny Canuck," and best of all "Nelvana of the Northern Lights" (see Hirsh et al). **[Slide 14]** Nelvana was a demi-goddess created by Adrian Dingle and Franz Johnston (of the Group of Seven) as the daughter of Koliak, King of the Northern Lights, and a mortal woman. She first appeared in August 1941, when her prime enemy was Hitler and the Axis powers. Her base of operations was the far North of Canada from where she could travel at the speed of light on the rays of the Aurora Borealis to intercept enemy attacks or invasions from the North. **[Slide 15]** Her mission was to protect the people of the North, and North included southern Canada where she would transform herself into secret agent Alana North to spy out enemies of the state. Nelvana made her last comic book appearance in May 1947, but in 1995 she was commemorated as a national hero with a special 45cent postage stamp**.**

Canadian writers and artists have not avoided critical representations of military activities in the North, although interestingly (and in contrast to the comic book propaganda) the invaders they focus on have often been American, rather than German or Japanese. For example, in *Windflower* (trans in 1970), Gabriele Roy tells the tragic story of a young Inuit woman who is raped by a soldier; painter Casimir Lindsey has captured the ravaged landscapes along the Canol Road, where American troops abandoned trucks and machinery when the road proved impossible to complete, and in the film *Map of the Human Heart* (1993), an Inuk soldier loses his white Canadian sweetheart to a southerner, and he lives out what remains of his shattered life on Baffin Island. In both the short story "Walk Well my Brother" by Farley Mowat (himself a veteran of WWII) and the film based on the story called *The Snow Walker* (2003), a northern bush pilot who flew bombers during the war has terrifying flash backs to scenes of combat, and the story line suggests that his violent, destructive behaviour in the Arctic is a direct result of his war trauma. When his plane crashes on the tundra, he is saved by the Inuit woman who is travelling with him because she teaches him, through her skill, patience, and reverence for the land and the dead, how to be a better human being. But by far the most striking representation of the impact of WWII on the Canadian North is found in Marie Clements's play *Burning Vision* and in Peter Blow's documentary film about uranium mining at Great Bear lake called *Village of Widows*.

III: Lessons from the North

In 1930 the Labine brothers *discovered* pitchblende ore, which produced high grade uranium, on the shores of Great Bear Lake in the NWT. **[Slide 16—close up map]** A

mine quickly developed at what was then called Port Radium and the challenge was to get this precious ore from the North down to markets in the South. The route, across Great Bear Lake to Fort Franklin, now called by its Dene name Deline (meaning "where the river flows" in Slavey), continued by river west to the Mackenzie and from there south by river barge to railheads at Port Hope. A significant number of the men mining and handling the sacks of ore as stevedores were local Sahtu Dene, and even as early as 1930 uranium was known to be a health hazard as well as a miracle cure—or at least treatment (as radiation)—for cancer. During the thirties, in the lead up to WWII, scientists were conducting research on new weapons that today we call "weapons of mass destruction," and with the discovery of how to make an atomic bomb uranium had another, and very strategic, purpose. When Dene were hired to work for the mine, they moved their entire families to the mine site and lived in tents at Port Radium. The fine powder from the ore blew everywhere—into sandboxes, across the vegetation eaten by the migrating caribou herds, and into the food being prepared by Dene women. The sacks carried by the Dene men leaked; tonnes of tailings accumulated on land and in the water. In short, radium contamination permeated everything in the environment. In 1942, Canadian Prime Minister, William Lyon Mackenzie King, signed off on a government agreement to take control of operations at Port Radium, and it is widely believed that some ore from that mine made its way into the American Manhattan Project.

After WWII, with the Soviet Union arming and the Cold War heating up—and long after it was clear what damage the atomic bombs had done in Japan—mining at Port Radium continued pretty much had it had during the war. Indeed, NFB films praised this

mining work for the war and after it, and in 1952 the Crawley film company produced an "industrial documentary" called *The Highway of the Atom*, a film that celebrated white, southern development of the North, which was seen as the property of southern Canadians, as a space empty of other people—except a few illiterate Indian stevedores—just waiting for progress to arrive in the form of resource development. Completely in tune with the times—the immediate post-war period—the narrator of *Highway of the Atom* announces that the uranium from Port Radium "ended WWII," and that the development of the mine and its transportation routes are bringing "new life and greater development for the Northwest."[3] It was not until the 1990s that another story began to emerge: the story of unusually high cancer rates, and deaths, among the Sahtu Dene in Deline. As Peter Blow showed in his 1999 documentary film *Village of Widows*, **[Slide 17—title & quote]** too many Dene have died of cancer for there to be no connection with the mine, and the Uranium Committee members from Deline are urgently seeking answers and help from the federal government as well as a kind of atonement or common ground with the Japanese survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Through interviews with widows from Deline and with Dene elders like George Blondin, and by juxtaposing his documentary footage with black and white news coverage from 1942 and historical NFB film footage from the 1950s, Blow creates a very moving and convincing exposé of the Dene situation and of government neglect.[4] He follows the Deline Uranium Committee delegation on their 1998 pilgrimage to Japan for the 53rd anniversary of the bombings; while there the Dene meet with survivors and descendants, pay their respects, and light traditional lantern candles that are set afloat on the River Ota. *Village of Widows* is both a direct influence on and an inspiration for the basic story of Clements's *Burning Vision*,

and this brief clip provides a glimpse into the history and treatment of the facts from the Dene perspective. **[Slide 17b: clip of 5 mins from film]**

Although Clements draws on much of this information for her play, she transforms the story into a parable of life and death for our times. Underlying her very complex, symbolic expressionist drama are many facts about WWII in the Pacific, the discovery of uranium by the Labine brothers in 1930, the mining operations well into the late 1950s, and the deaths from cancer of the miners, beginning in 1960. The cast is large (12 on-stage characters and 5 voice-over characters), and some of the characters are named for historical figures of the war period—Tokyo Rose (a Japanese-American "radio siren" whose real name was Iva Toguri), Lorne Greene, a well-known Canadian CBC announcer and actor nicknamed "the Voice of Doom" because the war news was so bleak, and the two Labine brothers. Two other characters, who have major symbolic roles, are simply called "Fat Man" (**Slide 18**)—"an American bomb test dummy manning his house in the late 1940s and 50s [who] gets more and more human as the bombs draw closer" (13) and "Little Boy"—"a beautiful Native boy. Eight to ten years old. The personification of the darkest uranium found at the centre of the earth" (13). The plot is sustained *through the presence* of a Dene Widow, who mourns by her fire from which she evokes the visions that supply the scenes of the play, and *by the voice* of the Dene See-er, a medicine man who speaks from the past of 1880 to the present of post-war devastation and threat, and warns all who will listen that the black rock—the uranium-bearing pitchblende—should not be touched. In production, (**Slide 19**) the through-line is reinforced visually by the flickering of flashlights, the Widow's fire, and the television screen, and aurally by the thundering sounds of caribou herds, the ticking

of radar, the clicking of radio dials and scratching of turntable needles that introduce popular period songs.

The play is structured in four "movements," not acts, and it is set in a timeless realm of vision that merges past and present, here at Great Bear Lake with there in the United States or in Japan. As this map (**Slide 20**), which introduces the published text, suggests, the place of *Burning Vision* is a palimpsest of events in time and space that identifies important human connections. And the scenes are brief visions called up by the Widow as she stares into her fire to dream into reality the movements of memory, trauma, death and life, love and hatred, despair and hope that define our humanity despite the rhetoric of racism and war-mongering, the dehumanization of the "other," the atrocities too often committed in the name of peace, and the ignorance and greed of individuals and colonial powers. This quality of dreaming or vision is established from the start when the play opens in total darkness and an audience is forced to feel and listen to the shuddering sounds of an explosion. After this dramatic start, the only lights one sees are the pin points of flashlights, as the Labine brothers stumble about in the dark, and the fire where the Widow sits. We are returned to this darkness and the Widow's fire at the end, when the Dene See-er's voice is once again heard speaking from the distant past and telling us all that "this burning vision is not for us now . . . it will come a long time in the future" (120), and the Widow speaks into her fire: "So many fires now, so many fires still burning. I've looked through this fire over time like a dream . . ." (120).

Inevitably, my brief description of this play makes it sound extremely pessimistic and accusatory, and I do not deny that it is a serious issues-based play that does point fingers: as Rose says directly **at** the audience:

> YOU'RE all so sorry [but] you can't really be sorry for something you don't want to remember can you. Selective memory isn't it? Let's be honest, hell, you can't even apologize for the shit you did yesterday never mind 50 years ago. (100)

Nevertheless, the intensity of live production, the totally encompassing sound and lighting effects of the drama, and the melding together of voices, three languages (Slavey, English, and Japanese), and composite characters from past and present, finally produce what I experienced in performance as an exhilarating testimony to human creativity and endurance. Because the play opens with the exploding atomic bomb, we are situated as witnesses, not only to a shared history of savage destruction but also to the struggle to understand, to survive, and to re-establish human values. Paradoxically perhaps, *Burning Vision* ends on a note—or a combination of notes—of hope: the voice-over of the Slavey radio announcer is followed by the Japanese announcer, and then by the Canadian announcer whose English reveals what we have heard: "Hello Granddad, brother, sister, son, husband, father, cousin, nephew, friend, my teacher, my love . . . We love you and miss you." (122). And in the final words of the play, the Japanese survivor, Koji, answers this radio call: "They hear us, and they are talking back in hope over time." (122).

IV: Conclusions: "talking back in hope" (Slide 21)

This brief and, for me, preliminary look at what Canadian artists have to say about war in the Canadian North suggests the following conclusions. Most obviously, the works I have mentioned tell Canadians, and others, about past military associations and activities North of 60 and in the provincial norths. By dramatizing and re-creating narratives about northern history these works illuminate some of the many complex local, national, and global relationships that pertain to and provide meaning within the North. Juxtaposing these fictions and plays with their factual roots and documentary parallels helps one see how art and artists have contributed to war propaganda, and it highlights some of the distinctions and contradictions between art as propaganda and art as resistance to a dominant discourse (about threats to security or sovereignty, or plans for nation-building and development, and so on). Because there is such a strong documentary element to all these works—even in a highly imaginative, postmodern novel like *The Man from the Creeks*—the North comes alive as a physical, social reality, by which I mean as a domain already occupied by peoples, voices, and stories rather than as a romantic fantasy. North in all these works is a home, not simply an empty space to develop, invade, or exploit.

Especially interesting to me—as a student of the North—are the shifts I detect in the representation of the North when it is imagined, written about, filmed, or staged, through the optic of war. Instead of being depicted as a far away place of romantic adventure or of masculine escape from boredom, civilization, women, social constraints and so on, or of glorious Euro-Canadian conquest of unknown places in search of wealth, fame, and empire in which the conflict exists between man and nature, the North associated with military activity necessitates other tropes to tell other kinds of stories.

The Canadian North imagined in these works is home to actual people (indigenous and settler); it bears the marks—the scars even—of human activity; it is socially and culturally precious to all Canadians—part of our story (as Kroetsch and Clarkson remind us), a place for peace, humility, and healing (as Boyden insists), and a *milieux de mémoire* (to use Nora's term) that instills history with lived experience. This finally is what I would call Clements's play—the envisioning on stage of a *milieux de mémoire* within which time and space (the abstractions of history and geography) are transformed into places where living people connect with their ancestors and with other people around the world. The values integral to this North are the opposite of those implicit in war: aggression, greed, narrow patriotism, and paranoia. That this *milieux* still has the power to destroy us (as in Franklin's day) is clear—planes still crash, mining feats cause contamination and death, survival is a daily challenge—but equally clear from the work I have considered is the increasingly urgent realization that the North is fragile and in need of protection, not only from foreign enemies but also from southern Canadian interests and ignorance.

In the current context of climate change, military rhetoric, security fears, and looming international conflict over resources and sovereignty, these literary and artistic works remind us of the urgent need for tolerance, responsibility, co-operation, and awareness . . . "lest we forget" not only the veterans and casualties of past wars but the repercussions and consequences of our present policies and actions. These works of art ask us to care and they remind us to hope for peace and constructive social action. Unlike the Labine brothers, who dismiss Indian dreams and stories, we need to listen to

the song of the Dene See-er from *Burning Vision* who says: “I sang many things and in the singing I saw the future, and I was disturbed” (104). **[Slide 22—thanks]**

---

[1] Radar air-defense stations were first built in Canada along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts in 1942. By 1949 Canada and the USA had decided to build the Pinetree Line along the border, and by 1954 Canada began a mid-Canada line (the McGill Fence, with 98 unmanned stations). In 1957 the Arctic DEW Line was completed, paid for by the Americans but manned mostly by Canadians. For a detailed study of militarization of Canada’s North, see Shelagh Grant’s *Sovereignty or Security?*, still one of the best studies of military activities by the Canadian and American governments in the North from 1936 to the 1980s. She calls chapter 5 “The Army of Occupation” to remind readers that the Americans called themselves that in their eagerness to take over, control, and develop the Canadian North in the interest of the United States. She has good discussions of the building of the Alaska Highway and the Canol Road, called by Richard Diubaldo “a monumental junkyard to military stupidity” (qtd in Grant, 133), and several interesting photographs showing how closely the American army guarded these sites, even from Canadians.

[2] *The 49th Parallel*, directed by Michael Powell with a screenplay by Emeric Pressburger, was initiated by the British Ministry of Information in 1940, but Powell and Pressburger wanted to create a film that would sway the United States to enter the war. When released in the USA in 1942, the film was called *The Invaders*. The lead actors donated their time or the fees (Walbrook donated half of his to the International Red Cross) and Vincent Massey, then the Canadian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom and the brother of actor Raymond Massey, read the prologue to the film. *The 49th Parallel* won Pressburger an Academy Award and was screened during the war in the UK, the USA, Sweden, Denmark, France, Finland, Italy, and Hong Kong, but not, to my knowledge, in Canada, although many scenes were shot on location in Banff, Corner Brook, Newfoundland, Niagara Falls, Winnipeg, Wolstenholme, Quebec, and in studios in Montreal.

[3] *Highway of the Atom* was one of many “industrial documentaries” made by Crawley Films. Labelled production #491, it was shot in November 1951 and finished in July 1952; the sponsor was the Northern Transportation Company, which explains a good deal about the boosterish tone of the piece. My thanks to

James Forrester and Paul Harris for the emails that provided this information on a now largely forgotten film. I would also like to thank my colleague Peter van Wyck for bringing the film to my attention in the first place. This colour film invokes an illustrious history of white explorers opening up the North to trade routes, industrial development, and progress. Contemporary mining and engineering feats are likened to the heroic endeavours of Alexander Mackenzie, and southern technology and science are touted as "carrying life to the North." The heroine of the film is the tug boat called the *Radium Franklin*, a new member of the Radium fleet, on her maiden voyage from the shipyards in Vancouver, up to Waterways, Alberta, to the Mackenzie River, and across on the Bear River to Fort Franklin (Deline) on Great Bear Lake. The North, while filmed as always beautiful, under sunny skies, is described by the narrator as "trackless" and empty; the Indians are stevedores who cannot read or write, and no mention is given of their families or communities; and we are told that the mine at Port Radium is "the very source of the power of the atom" that ended WWII and is now changing the world.

[4] I owe special thanks to Peter Blow for preparing a special copy of *Village of Widows* for me and granting me permission to screen a clip for this lecture. The film is narrated by Gary Farmer and includes interviews with Dene Elders like George Blondin, members of the Deline Uranium Committee, several Dene widows, white southerners like journalist Andrew Nikforiuk and men whose fathers operated the mine and who grew up as children playing in "sandboxes" filled with tailings. Blow makes effective use of black and white film footage from 1942 and 1957 to illustrate how a positive image of the mine and its precious ore was carefully managed for public consumption, and he contrasts this message with the Dene story of their search for redress and assistance—or even for acknowledgement from the Canadian government that wrongs were perpetrated during and after the war. Particularly disturbing are film sequences showing the massive radio-active tailings still polluting the land and water at Port Radium, and the footage of the Dene visiting Japan to participate in the remembrance ceremonies and meet Japanese survivors are fascinating and moving. Once again my thanks to Peter van Wyck for bringing this little know film to my attention.