

## **Proceedings of the Fifth Circumpolar Ecosystems Conference and Workshop, Churchill, Manitoba, Canada, February 2004—introduction**

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## Proceedings of the Fifth Circumpolar Ecosystems Conference and Workshop, Churchill, Manitoba, Canada, February 2004—Introduction

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During February 2004, we co-chaired the Fifth Circumpolar Ecosystems Conference and Workshop, hosted by the Churchill Northern Studies Centre (CNSC). More than 50 international participants traveled to Churchill for this meeting, which originated as part of the CNSC mandate of arctic research and education.

In 1989, Peter Scott organized the first CNSC-hosted meeting under the banner “Circumpolar Ecosystems in Winter.” At high latitudes, winter can be the dominant season that drives many physical and biological processes. Understanding these winter processes is critical in the context of climate change, and yet few researchers are actively studying environmental processes during winter. One of the purposes of these Churchill meetings was to address the need to increase winter research. This was obvious when the mandate of the meetings had to be expanded to include results of research in seasons other than winter to fill the program.

For the Fifth Circumpolar Ecosystems Conference we chose to continue the field science theme for the workshop by focusing on “snow sampling methodology and instrumentation.” Here participants had the opportunity to examine a wealth of traditional and newer technologies available to measure snow cover characteristics at a variety of scales. The second aspect of the meetings was the presentation and publication of a collection of scientific papers. The theme for the symposium was “Northern Margins: Changing Transition Zones in Time.” The range of papers for this symposium reflects the wide range of interest in the transitional zones that occur throughout the circumpolar north—

forest-tundra, fast ice–pack ice, continuous-discontinuous permafrost, snowpack temperature gradients, and snowpack melt, to name a few.

The three papers included here characterize the diversity of topics covered in the symposium. Two papers highlight research in the northern treeline transition zone in the Churchill area, focusing on snowpack variation in one case, and revegetation methods in the other. The third paper demonstrates the importance of latitudinal variation in environmental parameters on marine food webs. The meeting was sponsored by Campbell Scientific Canada Corporation; Parks Canada; Clayton H. Riddell Faculty of Earth, Environment and Resources, University of Manitoba; Enviro-Test Laboratories; University of Winnipeg; Brandon University; Eskimo Museum; Town of Churchill; Manitoba Conservation; Inter-Universities North (now University College of the North); and the Churchill Northern Store. We thank the sponsors and the residents of Churchill and CNSC staff for their support and cooperation in this endeavor.

Plans for the Sixth Circumpolar Ecosystems in Winter Symposium will be announced following the summer of 2007 as the CNSC has embarked on a facility renewal campaign that will result in a new research center. The proposed date of February 2009 will give the CNSC a chance to showcase their new facility by highlighting results of the 2007–2008 International Polar Year.

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