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"...organizations incrementally alter the institutional structure. They are not, however, necessarily socially productive because the institutional framework frequently has perverse incentives. Organizations will be designed to further the objectives of their creators. They will be created as a function not simply of institutional constraints but also of other constraints."

-Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance (North, 1995, p. 73.)

"The establishment of UNBC was the successful outcome of the Society's work... an achievement which many had predicted was beyond our capacity. And all of that done in three short, but hectic, years.

In a real way the university was a child of northern peoples – even if it is now being governed and administered by professionals from outside the region."

-UNBC: A Northern Crusade (McCaffray, 1995, p. 294)
Chapter One: Theories and Methods

1.1 – Introduction and Hypothesis

The University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) is nearing its 25th anniversary. As this milestone approaches, British Columbians can look back at an evolving institution¹ that has progressed significantly from early dreams held by northerners. The presence of UNBC has had an accumulating impact on the community and region it serves. As a graduate student moving to Prince George, I was interested in studying what set the northern provinces and territories apart from the south. I explored topics of regional development, circumpolar development, resource economies, local government, and political history—all through the lens of the north. As my focus narrowed to comparative regional development in northern British Columbia and the Nordic countries, UNBC’s establishment and growth quickly emerged as one of the most significant forces affecting growth and advancement in northern British Columbia today. My primary research subject was right underfoot. The university drew me north from Vancouver with unique opportunities and research avenues unavailable in the south. It seemed only natural to study an institution responsible for drawing academics and professionals north, away from the big traditional schools in the south, for over 20 years.

The establishment of UNBC was a special event in British Columbia’s history, and certainly revolutionary in the northern part of the province. The instant university which sprung

¹ The term “institution” in this paper requires some explanation. Readers may be used to seeing it in connection to physical schools, hospitals, police forces, legislatures, courts, or other types of public institutions. But in this paper the term is more likely to refer to social conventions, political ideology, government, family structure, religion, economic structure, and other social or political norms based on history. As much as possible, I have attempted to refer to universities by their proper name or as “universities”, in order that a distinction may be made between the macro-level institutions that affect universities and the universities as institutions themselves.
into existence in the early 1990s was the result of considerable grass-roots demand and fortuitous timing (McCaffray, 1995). In casual conversations with local residents, it is easy to see that UNBC has quickly become a cherished asset. It has given residents of Prince George pride in the capacity of their community, and has provided northern families with an alternative to sending their children to the far south. Yet, whether UNBC has become all that it could be is debatable. UNBC’s establishment was cause for celebration, but more than 20 years later the successes and shortcomings of the university need to be assessed. It is necessary to explore how well UNBC has truly lived up to the dreams of its early planners, as well as the reasons for its current direction and form as an educational institution.

The evolution and establishment of UNBC is not completely unique. Across the circumpolar north, in both domestic and international environments, a similar story of northern development via higher education has played out, or is just beginning. In some cases Canada is out-pacing its circumpolar peers, while in others we may lag behind. Where UNBC exists on this spectrum of success in circumpolar higher education is especially relevant due to the fact that the early planners, administrators, and academics who laid out a vision for UNBC clearly intended for it to follow in the footsteps of similar institutions in Norway, Sweden, and Finland (Dahllof, 1989; McCaffray, 1995, p. 108). This early goal has been recurrent in UNBC’s short history, and still serves as a kind of paradigm for some leaders at the university (van Adrichem, 2008). This paper seeks to assess whether UNBC has successfully imitated similar institutions in the northern peripheries of the Nordic nations, and why (or why not).

In order to answer such a question, it is necessary to explore why Nordic universities have been so highly esteemed as a model for educational development. A study of what unites and differentiates the Nordic experience from that of British Columbia’s was also important.
With this background information in hand, a comparative study between UNBC and an exemplar of Nordic higher education in the north was the next logical step. Such a study allows for a contextual concrete comparison of institutional histories and environments between UNBC and a Nordic peer. As will be explained in more detail in following chapters, this paper analyzes UNBC’s success in imitating the Nordic Model (Nord, 2002, p. 187). In his work on circumpolar post-secondary education, Douglas Nord sees northern universities as performing four vital tasks: improving access to education; providing professional education and training; assisting regional economic growth and diversification; and encouraging new social and cultural development (p. 178). He proceeds to compare North American and Soviet universities against Nordic universities in the circumpolar north, claiming that both systems can be assessed as differing models of northern university development. Nord states that the Nordic Model is the only system which adequately performs all four tasks on a consistent basis, and is thus the superior model for university development. In this paper, I will analyze UNBC to see if it conforms more to the Nordic or North American Models. I will also compare it to a Nordic exemplar university – the University of Tromsø (UiT) in Norway – so that I can assess whether Nord’s argument holds true on a case-study basis, and so that I can directly compare UNBC’s progress against an example of the Nordic Ideal.

This research project has three related purposes. Its first purpose is to evaluate UNBC according to Nord’s criteria for a successful circumpolar university, which I refer to as the “Nordic Ideal” in reference to the tendency amongst academics to idealize Nordic universities. The second purpose of this research project is to use historical institutionalism to explain why

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2 Nord refers to a “Soviet Model” of university development when referencing northern universities in the Russian Federation. Despite the 2002 publication-date of *Higher education across the Circumpolar North*, Nord chooses to focus on these institutions as they once were under the communist USSR. As such, the Soviet or Russian Model he describes has not existed for more than two decades. Due to the extreme differences between Russia’s institutional history and the west, as well as the collapse of the USSR, this model will not be discussed in this project.
Canadian and Nordic universities differ. In order to do this, I will build on Nord’s brief explanation for the “key variables” leading to differences between circumpolar universities (Nord, 2002, p. 187). Significant differences in institutional, ideological, and economic context exist between UNBC and UiT. These differences explain the disparity in their respective developments. Thirdly, this project will evaluate the “Nordic Ideal” constructed by Nord in his typology of northern universities, and ask whether a Nordic university like UiT even lives up to all the standards it should theoretically exemplify.

This research project will demonstrate that UNBC has not met many of the criteria Nord claims the Nordic Model exemplifies. It will also show that Nordic institutions themselves do not provide all four services identified by Nord with the comprehensive nature he describes. However, UNBC has had limited success in living up to the achievements of its Nordic peers – especially in the realms of professional and cultural education. Despite some success in establishing nursing, teaching, social work, and medical programs, the university lags behind the number of programs offered at UiT. The reasons for UNBC’s inability to follow up on the goals established by its Nordic-influenced founders are linked less to an improper “model” than to its existence in a significantly different institutional environment. UNBC’s foundational ideology is at odds with British Columbia’s political culture, political structure, history, social expectations, and economic model. Whether or not UNBC continues to pursue the Nordic Ideal that has defined its early internal policy, and is of questionable existence, will be up to leaders who are embedded in British Columbia’s institutions.

This paper will seek to answer whether or not UNBC is fulfilling its original plan to mimic its Nordic peers by studying it in comparison with UiT, through the theoretical lens of historical institutionalism (Hall & Taylor, 1996). Historical institutionalism is a social science
theory which argues that institutions are a dominant force in shaping how policy and events occur. Historical institutionalists believe that institutions change slowly, and that change in society or policy is deeply affected by historical choices and patterns established in earlier times. Major change typically comes during times of crisis or at “critical junctures” (p. 942). Therefore, universities are the products of their institutional environments. Their direction and evolution is connected to historical institutional norms established years, decades, or even centuries in the past.

By exploring what forces have affected and continue to affect the development of UNBC against those of a comparable university in the Nordic countries, it is possible to see how UNBC’s path mimics or differs from the schools it hopes to imitate. It is the intention of the author not to explain whether successful imitation of the Nordic Model is the best policy, but to determine how much of that goal has been accomplished, and why deviations have occurred. Accordingly, this paper will assess the history and institutional environments of the regions where UNBC and UiT are located. It will also analyze their foundational and organizational past as universities. In the following chapters, the history of both UiT and UNBC will be explored in relation to the histories of Norway and British Columbia respectively. This history will be explored in a literature review as well as through data presented from field research. A synthesis of the above data in relation to whether UNBC’s is following a Nordic paradigm or ideal will form the conclusion of this project.

For the purposes of this paper, it must be noted that the states traditionally identified as existing in the Nordic region differ from one another in a variety of ways. While they may seem a natural cluster when contrasted to the rest of Europe or the circumpolar north, significant differences exist. In fact, debate continues over the Nordic status of some nations traditionally
associated with the bloc, such as Finland (Hilson, 2008, p. 12). This project will consider a more broad definition for the term “Nordic”, following the model described by Mary Hilson (2008), as constituting the members of the Nordic Council, including Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, Denmark, Greenland, the Faroe Islands, and Åland.\(^3\) Norway was chosen as an example of the Nordic ideal due in part to its continuing use of a strong social welfare model, particularly in relation to how the state treats its rural periphery (Baldersheim & Rose, 2010; Hansen, 1999; Aarsæther, 2004; Heidar, 2001; Rommetvedt, 1992). Nord’s acknowledgement of the role played by the ideology of social welfare in the Nordic countries made Norway a practical choice (Stephens, 1996).

1.2 – The Nordic Ideal

The impetus for this project was shaped by encountering frequent comparisons between higher education in northern North America and similar developments in the Nordic countries. In particular, the writings of Douglas Nord and Geoffrey Weller provide a basis for the central question of how well UNBC lives up to the Nordic Model. In Higher Education across the Circumpolar North: A circle of learning (2002), Nord claims that three models of higher education exist in the circumpolar north. He establishes that circumpolar universities have traditionally been viewed as tools “in promoting community economic growth and diversification” (p. 177). The three “models of university and regional development” identified by Nord are the Nordic Model, the North American Model, and the Soviet Model. Nord explains that circumpolar universities in each of the three models have been viewed as tools or

\(^3\) For the purposes of this paper, I have chosen to use the term “Nordic”, which is partially derived from the term Norden and widely used in those countries (Hilson, 2008). I have chosen not to use the term Scandinavia due to its less geographically inclusive definition and usage mainly by outsiders to refer to Norway and Sweden.
instruments to advance solutions to regional concerns. He organizes the objectives of northern universities into four categories: access to education; professional education and training; assisting regional economic growth and diversification; and encouraging new social and cultural development (Nord, p. 178).

These four categories provide a method of analyzing the "success" of a northern university. I have chosen to study UNBC in comparison to UiT by looking at both universities through the framework of the above four criteria. While these criteria form the core of my analysis, I also considered financial and practical data such as funding, faculty working conditions, and other institutional norms which may affect who these criteria are met or unmet. By gauging how well a university performs in access to education; professional education and training; assisting regional economic growth and diversification; and encouraging new social and cultural development, it is possible to determine its performance in comparison with other circumpolar universities.

It is therefore necessary to define what Nord means by these terms. Access to education in this context refers to how easy it is for northern students to get post-secondary higher education and training. Before the construction of universities in the north, students in many northern regions across the circumpolar north were historically required to travel to southern metropolitan areas to receive a university education. The establishment of universities was intended to facilitate better local access to education and increase enrollment amongst northern citizens. Northern universities also typically service a large geographic area and a more scattered population than southern universities. This means that access often entails the establishment of satellite campuses and significant teleconference capacity so that students in the university's identified catch-basin can have access to some instruction.
When Nord refers to professional education and training, he means the training of doctors, lawyers, engineers, and other "professionals". These types of professionals are typically trained in specialized faculties at universities and are critical to the existence of a functioning developed society. Often such schools are only found in the largest or most central universities. Such programs require large financial commitments. Northern regions have historically suffered from a lack of professionals, with most graduates trained in the south. According to Nord, a primary goal of northern universities should be to solve this problem by providing professional education opportunities to the local population.

When Nord states that universities in the circumpolar north should assist regional economic growth and diversification, he means that universities should actively work with government and industry to facilitate a more robust and diverse local economy in the north. This often entails research partnerships with local businesses, the establishment of research or science parks, and the support for spin-off companies and research institutes in the north. This model is known as the Triple Helix approach (Nilsson, 2006, p. 23), and will be described in further detail below. In the area of diversification, Nord believes northern universities can play a critical role in transforming the local economy by training and re-training the local population -- with a direct benefit being higher employment and wages (Nord, p. 285). The emphasis in this case is on knowledge-based education, in order to move northern economies away from a dependence on low-skill resource-dependent economies. This would entail more high tech and skilled service-based employment, linking the north to the global and national markets in a more extensive way than raw resource production (p. 285).

Finally, Nord includes the encouragement of new social and cultural development as criteria for success as a northern university. He mentions this includes the construction of new
venues and encouragement for the arts, but implies that social and cultural development activities should be more extensive in influencing surrounding communities (Nord, p. 186). This final criterion of northern university success is somewhat unclear in Nord’s text, but it can be assumed he is referring to fine arts and cultural programs including theatre, visual art, architecture, drama, creative writing, and other programs. Other possible ways for universities to encourage the social and cultural development is to host guest artists and speakers, making them available to the general public, as well as to host conferences and festivals, and to work with local artists and cultural figures to promote localized programs for students.

Under the above framework, Nord identifies the Nordic Model as the most successful at meeting each of the four criteria for success as a circumpolar university (p. 180). He cites several of Norwegian, Swedish, and Finnish institutions as examples of the Nordic Model, including the University of Tromsø. Nord credits the post-war universities in the northern reaches of the Nordic countries as being unique in giving equal emphasis to each of the four goals identified. He describes the Nordic Model as being uniquely focused on universal access to higher education, and the wider benefit to the nation (p. 180). Nord identifies advanced education under the Nordic Model as a feature of a healthy social democracy, something not found in the North American or Russian Models. In particular, Nord points to the Nordic trend of alleviating imbalances between the centre and periphery through direct investment, and the development of northern capacity. He points to the establishment of professional schools in Nordic universities as evidence of this mindset. Nord also identifies a drive to diversify the local economy, provide long-term restructuring, and further the social and cultural development in the north as part of the Nordic Model.
Against this admiring description of the Nordic Model, Nord finds North American institutions to be lacking. He describes the model, which he believes UNBC fits into, as failing to succeed in the four criteria for success as a circumpolar university. He writes: “[i]n this model or approach, the four arguments for university development are not given equal emphasis by any means. Clear priority is given to two: access and economic growth” (Nord, 181). Nord notes that North American universities are typically the product of lobbying and political trade-offs, rather than top-down government commitments. He states that less consideration is taken in selecting the types of academic programs offered in American and Canadian circumpolar universities, and claims that no commitment exists to long-term professional education or training. In North America, professional education in these newer universities is often delayed until the universities are more firmly established. Nord describes the North American Model as being more short-sighted, with an emphasis on immediate job spin-offs and as a complement to the natural resource economy. He describes the university as being separate from the community, with little cultural exchange where economic priorities take precedence over social and cultural development.

Nord is largely looking back over the years from the 1960s to the end of the twentieth century in his analysis. The differences between the models he establishes were potentially more pronounced twenty or thirty years ago. This paper seeks to establish the present state of comparison between UNBC, which Nord identifies as fitting into the North American Model, and UiT, which he holds up as an exemplar of the more successful Nordic Model of regional and university development. Whether UNBC may be “catching up” to its Nordic peers is the question this project seeks to assess. But it is also important to consider whether Nord’s three models of northern education are the best way of viewing the situation. Nord grades the Nordic model as
having “outdistanced” the North American Model, and both of these to have out-distanced the Russian Model (p. 185).

Distance is a curious descriptor for rating success in this context, as Nord does not seem to indicate that North America will “catch up” in its current direction, but that it is inherently flawed in its approach to higher education in the north. He points to the primarily undergraduate nature of North American institutions, with few professional or graduate programs. He describes North American institutions as having done little to diversify local economies or institute change, instead re-enforcing the existing business patterns. He assesses North American intuitions as having done little, by comparison, to encourage social and cultural development beyond the addition of some venues or encouragement of the arts.

The drive to use universities as a tool for fostering greater social equality in Nordic states is a motive for their success, according to Nord. This ambition has been identified by other authors (Hilson, 2008), who describe how Nordic states took on the task of planning out and implementing a better society. As Nord explains, “the existence of comprehensive and integrated planning” (Nord, 2002, p. 187) is a major factor in the difference between North American and Nordic Models. Scholars and officials were given a special hand in the planning of regional development with the university as a central fixture in a wider scheme. He describes the North American Model as being reliant on improvisation and short-term gain. The disconnect between the university and the community is fostered by the lack of comprehensive planning and the grass-roots nature of local lobbying for political and economic favour in North America. Finally, Nord identifies the Nordic Model as being better funded, with necessary resources being allocated for all phases of the university’s establishment. The desire for inexpensive universities
and low-costs in North America has resulted “in inferior academic quality” (p. 189). The improvised lobbying for additional funds is *ad hoc* in nature, meaning little can be done in the way of comprehensive planning and universities in the North American Model must live with lower budgets and less substantive goals than their Nordic peers.

Nord’s ideas of Nordic higher education represent a “Nordic ideal”, whereby the Nordic Model he describes is elevated to a superior status, with little consideration of differing histories, geographies, or institutional contexts. By rating the North American Model against the Nordic Model on a ranked scale, he suggests that their circumpolar locations are enough of a basis for competitive ranking in outcomes. Nord is not the only scholar to attempt to champion the Nordic ideal in North America. From UNBC’s early days, planners have looked to the Nordic countries for inspiration in how to establish a northern university. Urban Dahllof, a scholar from Sweden, was the man selected as a consultant for a $100,000 study on the need for a university in Prince George (McCaffray, 1995, p. 97). He brought with him a rich resume of experience in Europe and Australia. He travelled to universities in Norway, Sweden, and Finland as part of his research for the study (p. 99), and based much of his knowledge of higher education in the north on Nordic institutions.

From the outset, the already-established universities in northern Norway, Sweden, and Finland had a major influence on what would be seen as the proper model for northern university development. The Soviet Union was outside of comparable parameters, while few institutions in North America existed with which to compare. Dahllof clearly indicated his preference for a Nordic-style institution in his report (Dahllof, 1989), pointing to specific features a future university in Prince George could emulate: a regional campus network; integration with

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4 Nord’s statements are based on generalizations. He offers no hard data on comparative funding levels in his chapter.
community colleges; arts, sciences, education, and commerce degrees; fine and performing arts training; a northern focus in all departments; sequential scheduling of classes for intensive study of single topics at a time; local industrial and municipal support, etc. Other academics active in UNBC's development have shared a deeply positive view of the Nordic Model, to the point of promoting Nordic policy in British Columbia (Weller, 1989; van Adrichem, 2008). This tendency to look to the Nordic universities has become a subconscious foil against which many of UNBC's successes and failures have been evaluated. But UNBC is slowly carving out its own unique story in British Columbia, and a body of writing is developing that deals with how UNBC came to be.

1.3 - Historical Institutionalism

In an effort to build on the work of Nord and others, and develop an analytical framework of explaining similarities and differences in the ways that northern universities have evolved, the two case studies used in this project were studied through the lens of historical institutionalism, as described by Hall & Taylor (1996). Historical institutionalism is primarily a social science oriented worldview favoured by political scientists who believe institutions have a strong impact on how we behave, especially in regard to policy and major change. The view draws on older traditions within political science, but it broadens the definition of what constitutes an important institution (Hall & Taylor). Policy decisions in regard to development are heavily influenced by the structure and history of the major institutions which govern society, such as municipal, provincial and federal governments, economic structure, cultural norms, unions, religious doctrine, the military, ideological organizations, and more. Likewise, universities are powerful
organizations in our society, given early purpose and structure via the actions of parent institutions. While individuals remain important, they are seen as “an entity deeply embedded in a world of institutions, composed of symbols, scripts and routines, which provide the filters for interpretation…they also affect the very identities, self-images and preferences of the actors” (p. 939). This paper explores the ideas of some “deeply embedded individuals” that had a major impact on UNBC and UiT is development in my project. Interviews with embedded actors are a crucial part of my research, as they possess first-hand experience of the scripts and routines that have shaped UiT.

By examining the history of UiT and UNBC as universities embedded within the wider political and social structure, it is possible to uncover the process by which they came to exist, and how they continue to function within society and the larger web of governing institutions. Power is a central concern of historical institutionalism, especially disparities and inequalities of power. One reason for UNBC and UiT’s establishment was the identification of a power imbalance by northerners and government officials. Change, according to historical institutionalism is gradual, but also comes in critical junctures, when extraordinary events create new paths for historical development, such as war, elections, or the establishment of a new university (p. 942). The above views are mirrored in other academic works on institutional change, especially in relation to economic development and performance (North, 1995, p. 73; p. 96). It is within this framework of greater historical institutional pressure and influence that we can understand how UNBC and UiT have come to their present states of being.
1.4 - Methodology

In order to answer the question of UNBC's success at following a Nordic Model of circumpolar university development, it was necessary to study higher education and northern development in the Nordic states. While information on a number of universities in Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, and Iceland was important, my primary basis for investigating Nordic higher education in the north was a comparative case study. Approximately twice the age of UNBC and positioned north of the Arctic Circle, the University of Tromsø (UiT) in Norway is the comparative foil for UNBC in this paper. It represents one of the most successful universities among the Nordic states' northern regions, existing in a similar-sized community to Prince George, but benefiting from a longer existence. UiT is an example of the northern ideal held up by many professionals involved in UNBC's past and present evolution.

In order to properly study UiT and the Norwegian institutional environment, it was necessary to conduct a series of semi-structured interviews in Norway. Interviews lasted between a half-hour to just over one hour. Six interviews were held with key individuals from Troms and Finnmark fylker (counties). These individuals perform a variety of roles including academics, administrators, business owners, government bureaucrats, and elected officials. For the purposes of privacy and in accordance with the ethical provisions for research involving humans at UNBC, the interviewees remain anonymous. The research was primarily qualitative in nature, involving participant observation during two months working and conducting research in Tromsø and Kirkenes, Norway. Aside from formal interviews with key individuals, casual conversations, observation, and literature provided additional data for this paper. Similarly,
academic literature, historical documents, and conversations with staff and faculty provided background information on UNBC's more recent origins.

1.5 – Overview

This paper is broken into five major chapters, including this introductory chapter. I will review relevant literature on UNBC and British Columbia, before discussing some important literature on UiT and the situation in Norway. Following the literature review will be the main body of the paper. In this chapter I will address the history and present state of the University of Tromsø in Norway. This section will be grounded by findings and data gleaned from interviews, readings, and observation in Norway. I will also present similar data on UNBC. I will close the main body with an analysis and explanation chapter. The fifth and concluding chapter will be devoted to a summary of my project, recommendations on future research, and a discussion of policy issues related to this paper.
Chapter Two: Norway

2.1 - Historical and Political Development

Despite the relatively short history of the modern Kingdom of Norway, the Norwegian nation can trace its history back thousands of years. Current inhabitants relate to Norse ancestors who traveled the same narrow fjords and isolated forested valleys. Farming and fishing defined local economies for generations, particularly in the north. Unlike other European powers, Norway does not have a history of powerful urban centres. It has no Paris, Rome, or Berlin. Its largest city, Oslo, has only recently developed into a major urban centre. In the 1820s, the national population reached 1 million (Heidar, p. 11), and today is approximately 5 million, a figure that is coincidentally very close to British Columbia’s population. Most of Norway’s existence historically has been rural. It is a connection that remains strong in the minds of Norwegians, who have taken measures to protect and cherish their rural heritage. This tendency has been documented in academic writing:

Farmers are often regarded as the core of national identity, but Norway is an extreme case of strong idealization of the farmers and fishermen as a symbol of the nation. One reason for this is that in the 19th century when Norwegian nationalism arose other socio-economic groups on which national identity could be projected were simply missing (Hille, 2003, p. 180).

The importance of the past on current political culture is also evident when one considers the fact that prior to full independence in 1905, civil servants were heavily influenced by longstanding Danish cultural influences, while the monarchy was located in Sweden. A weak urban class and small cities, combined with a lack of nobility, meant people looked deep into their Viking past to find heroes. Hille explains, “They idealized farmers and fishermen in the peripheries of the
country as the core of Norwegianness” (p. 180). Unsurprisingly, the country’s small aristocracy had their titles abolished in 1821 (Heidar, p. 12).

Norway’s agrarian-oriented rural culture is strongly influenced by geography. Strung-out, and facing the Atlantic Ocean, Norwegians have depended on the sea for communication and commerce (p. 2). The demands of this arrangement historically meant strong local governments were important, and “[t]he periphery remained strong throughout the process of nation-building. The center was a necessity, not a national pride” (p. 3). The strength of the periphery, combined with a glorification of the rural, combined to influence politics during the formation of the modern nation state. Norway’s constitution is no exception. It affords disproportionate strength to representation from the peripheral districts. Representation, on a strictly demographic level, is not equal across the country (p. 3). For example, “[m]andates are allocated in a manner which favours more geographically distant counties, the result being that it takes only 7,400 voters to elect an MP from Finnmark, the northernmost county, while around 18,000 votes are required to elect one from the capital of Oslo” (Baldersheim and Rose, 2011, p. 284). Living in a rural peripheral region means an individual voter’s voice is substantially more powerful in the Storting - the Norwegian parliament.

The Storting itself is structured in a way that encourages compromise. Representatives are seated by geography, not party. The Storting draws on a different history than the land holding aristocratic roots of Anglo-influenced parliaments. The Storting (literally “great thing”) derives from the Thing – a gathering of equals, typically under open skies on a hill, to discuss politics in order to reach an agreement or consensus on important matters (Albrecht, 2003, p. 156). Peace and compromise were hallmarks of this early form of egalitarian decision-making. The circular or round-table lay-out of a Thing, which avoids the hierarchical elevation of any
single member, can be seen in the Storting’s physical construction (Rommetvedt, 1992, p. 89). A proportional representation system of elections, combined with the multiplicity of parties, requires constant negotiation and compromise for governments to avoid collapse, while still allowing for fringe interests to be heard. With members from the periphery strongly represented in the Storting, and sitting as regional blocs, they are able to form a powerful voice at the national level.

In any state, economics, service provision, legislation, and other factors are shaped by a combination of high (national/provincial) and low (local) government (Sharpe, 1970, p. 154-155). In Norway, local government autonomy is remarkably strong. As a result, remote communities more fully control their own destiny, and are able to address needs specific to residents and geography. Local governments have existed formally in Norway since the 1830s. The *Formannskapsloven* gave elected municipal boards (*Formannskap*) the right to decide local issues such as poverty relief, infrastructure, and education in the municipalities (*kommunes*) (Heidar, p. 47-48). The responsibilities and powers given to local government or “community democracy” have increased over time.

Norway consists of over 400 municipalities, which range in population from a few hundred people to hundreds of thousands of residents. Local assemblies (*kommunestyre*) are elected and can range from small councils of 11 individuals to large municipal parliaments. Immigrants without Norwegian citizenship can vote in municipal and county elections, if they have been residents in Norway for three years (p. 48). The power of local governments is not entrenched constitutionally, meaning the Storting could withdraw local government authority to Oslo. However, politically, such an act is essentially impossible.
Municipalities in Norway employ over 300,000 individuals (p. 48) and are free to assume functions they consider “necessary and beneficial for the local community” (p. 49). Presently, municipal governments are active in health and social services, preschool and primary education, construction and physical municipal planning, and culture. Legal and regulatory restrictions exist, which hamper the extent of local power. The central government also controls monetary transfers and establishes guidelines while exerting moral pressure on local governments (p. 49). A struggle over local autonomy exists in Norway, but in a unique manner when compared to other western governments like British Columbia’s.

Local governments are often afforded new responsibilities, but not the funding to support these services or obligations—a situation similar to that in British Columbia, but with different causes. As Heidar explains, “[t]he principle of local democracy often collides frontally with the principle of equality in these debates. If equality demands equal service throughout the country, this obviously restricts the freedom of municipalities to do different things” (50). Some municipalities are unable to undertake certain projects when they must devote their funds to maintaining the provision of services at a level equal to more affluent areas. This situation takes on added importance in a society that strongly values economic equality. These policies serve as regional development drivers, because “[i]n the Nordic cases, it is very difficult to think about regional policies without reference to the development of the national welfare states... low housing costs and extensive self-provision are common in the countryside...” (Aarsæther and Bærenholdt, 2001, p. 21) The expansion of the welfare state to the rural periphery in the 1960s and 1970s extended high-level service provisions such as schools, infrastructure and healthcare to previously isolated fringe communities.
The costs of such services run high. Municipalities represent roughly 60 percent of public consumption, far above other Western European states (Heidar 50). Notably, universities are funded almost entirely by the national government and research bodies in Oslo and remain independent from their local communities in terms of fiscal support. This contrasts the nature of many other social institutions in Norway, which are supported largely by local government. Understandably then, municipalities are free to raise their own taxes via income tax, corporate tax, and other means, but most already do so at the highest legal limit. As such, the central government has been pressured to transfer larger amounts of money to the municipalities.

Pressure to amalgamate municipalities (to create economies of scale and, in theory, efficiencies) also exists. In the 1960s, Norway reduced the number of municipalities from approximately 750 to the current number. In the 1990s, a proposal to reduce the number of municipalities to about 200 was vehemently resisted. (Interestingly, Sweden has a little over 200 municipalities with a population roughly double Norway’s.) This issue surfaced again in the 2009 parliamentary elections. A principle of voluntary amalgamation has meant limited experimentation with municipal boundaries. But in 2009 some parties showed a willingness to consider top-down mandatory mergers (Baldersheim & Rose, 2010, p. 100). It remains to be seen whether this will occur.

Despite threats of top-down action, it is evident that local governments exercise tremendous power in Norway, accounting for the majority of spending. Remote peripheral communities are able to plan and provide services that meet their unique needs with less direct reliance from Oslo. Since the end of the Second World War, these policies have had a particularly strong effect on development in the north.
2.2 – Northern Norway: The Need for a University

In an already peripheral and northern country with vast areas of rugged geography, the north of Norway represents a historically isolated, poor, and unique region. Its history and society has a different narrative than southern communities. In the north, settling Norwegians met the indigenous Sami society when they arrived centuries ago (Hansen, 1999, p. 347). While the Vikings had traveled and accessed the coastline all the way into the White Sea, permanent settlement of northern Norway by Norse Norwegians came more gradually as farmers and fishermen sought out new lands to colonize north of Hålogaland, a petty kingdom that encompassed parts or all of Nord-Trøndelag, Nordland, and Troms counties. Hansen notes that the Finnmark communities of Hammerfest and Vardø were founded in 1789, after the end of a centralized trade monopoly. This allowed a flourishing trade of flour for fish with the Russians to grow until the Russian Revolution in 1917 (p. 347). Norway’s border with Russia and Finland has been a somewhat militarized, yet important economic meeting place between cultures and trade networks since well before independence (p. 347). Since the end of the Cold War, northern Norway has been gradually reclaiming its historical geostrategic and economic importance as a dynamic borderland and crossroads between nations (Aure, 2011, p. 171-172). However, it retains a highly peripheral status in Norway’s economic and political system. This border has been a site of violence and trauma in the past, such as during the German withdrawal from Norway at the end of the Second World War.

The establishment of a university in such a peripheral and unique part of the country would require an equally unique vision. The growth of the University of Tromsø in northern
Norway marked the beginning for a new era north of Trondheim for local inhabitants as well as national planners. As will be described, the university’s growth has occurred in tandem with the economic development and integration of northern Norway’s far-flung communities, especially Tromsø itself.

Norway possesses several key geographic and economic characteristics which support the grounds for a comparative study with British Columbia. Norway’s economy has been historically focused on resource extraction, and remains so today (Hansen, 1999; Milward, 1972; Sandvik, 2008; Bennett, 2000; Hovelsrud, Dannevig, West, & Amundsen, 2010; Kristoffersen & Young, 2010; Nuttall, 2010). Historic pillars of the economy in northern Norway include fishing, agriculture, mining, and forestry. Today, these sectors continue to contribute to the national economy, with varying levels of success. However, the energy sector has become the dominant resource industry and is the engine of the national economy. Norway’s success in profiting from its offshore oil and gas reserves has created a unique need for it to balance this economic stimulus against inflation and economic overheating (Bowles & Cappelen, 2008). Petroleum extraction activities in Norway have historically been concentrated in the southwest, with many of the primary operations being based in the port city of Stavanger. However, in recent years, increasing exploration and activity is occurring in the north, with the cities like Tromsø, Harstad, and Hammerfest benefitting from the energy economy (Kristoffersen & Young, 2010). Oil exploration is boosting economic growth in northern Norway, but residents are concerned about possible environmental damage and the challenges posed by rapid demographic change.

Norway’s history has been shaped by its geography. The nation is one of the most sparsely populated in Europe, with a population that is strung out along a rugged coastline of mountains, fjords, and isolated forest valleys (Heidar, 2001). The inaccessibility of Norway’s
communities by land has resulted in a strong attachment to the sea as a means of transportation and communication. While Oslo was not a serious metropolitan power in Norway’s history, it has increasingly grown in influence, size, and economic activity over the last century. The creation of a periphery-centre relationship between the Oslo region and the outlying rural counties in the south is magnified in the relationship between Oslo and the north (Hansen, 1999).

Northern Norway is, in a sense, a periphery of a periphery. Its position on the edge of a nation that exists on the margins of Europe means that residents feel little connection with the larger metropolitan centres of continental Europe and have often been the primary force behind Norway’s resistance to joining the European Union (Hille, 2003). Additionally, the north has often been culturally isolated, and referred to, even within the Nordic nations, as a wasteland or place of nothingness (Lehtinen, 2003). This tendency of the south to define the north through symbolism and language can be traced to the historically strong economic, demographic, and educational advantage held by southerners. At the same time, the Norwegian state has, since the Second World War, actively sought to integrate its northern territories into the greater society (Heidar, 2001; Bukve, 2000; Aarsæther, 2004; Berg, 1995; Milward, 1972; Mønnesland, 1994; Rommetvedt, 1992; Stephens, 1996; van Adrichem, 2008; Weller, 1989). This was a result of social welfare policies stemming from a unique left-of-centre coalition between urban working-class socialists and rural farmers initiated after the war and lasting relatively intact for many decades (Bjerve, 1959; Milner, 1994; Heidar, 2001).

The Second World War had a profound effect on Norway, especially in the north, where German forces attempted to extend infrastructure in order to transport troops and export resources. Norway was occupied primarily for its strategic geographic value as well as its possession of vital materials important to the German war effort (Milward, 1972). Particularly,
Norway’s aluminum industry and its access to sources of low-cost hydro-electric electricity became highly valuable to the Germans (Sandvik, 2008). Germany’s occupation of Norway restructured the national economy, removing it from the increasing global integration of the pre-war years and forcing it into a Euro-centric economy. When the Germans left, the Norwegians did not return to a pre-war model of production in the aluminum industry (Sandvik, 2008), but established a heavily nationalized and state-controlled model of production. This model arguably influenced the Norwegian energy economy and the evolution of Statoil, a largely state-owned oil and gas company.

Most significantly for the north, the Germans adopted a “scorched earth” policy during their withdrawal from the northern regions. They set nearly every building to the torch (Hansen, 1999; Arbo & Fulsås, 2002). The destruction was so extensive, that northerners treat any surviving building from before 1945 as a heritage structure, and protect it. Northerners fled to caves and mines during the final months of the war, hiding from the violence as the Germans retreated and Soviet troops invaded. Monuments to their Soviet liberators, crested with the hammer and sickle, still exist in northern Norwegian communities. A special, though sometimes strained, relationship with Russia persists in northern Norway, especially in eastern Finnmark (Aure, 2011).

While northern Norwegians may joke about wishing the Germans had stayed around long enough to complete their planned railway to Tromsø, the memories from the war are traumatic. The national government tried to prevent northerners from returning to their homes in lieu of reconstruction after the war (Hansen, 1999), but few listened. After living hidden in poverty, they quickly emerged to reclaim their former homes and begin reconstruction. Some communities in the north were rebuilt in a style familiar to many in British Columbia.
Spearheaded by large mining corporations, communities like Kirkenes were reconstructed on a grid plan, with the company paying for the building costs and separating the working class from the managers in different areas of Sør-Veranger.  

Northern Norway’s war experience was followed by a tremendous wave of development in the 1960s and 1970s. Authors like Heidar, Hilson, and Hansen describe how the state laid down the social welfare network in stages, often beginning in the capital regions and slowly spreading the lattice-work of institutions and supports outward. In some cases, the social welfare system was extended to the north even as it was being scaled back in the more established south (Hilson, p. 87-99). Until the 1960s, many in the north saw little of the benefits of the growing welfare state, and continued living without modern conveniences while fishing in small wooden craft into the 1950s (Hansen, 1999; Arbo & Fulsås, 2002). However, the arrival of the welfare state had a transformative effect, particularly for residents of northern Norway. The social welfare system, beyond being a social insurance net, acted as a vehicle for economic development in Norway and other Nordic states (Hilson, p. 88). It acted as a force for modernization, both of the economy and of society itself, and often went hand-in-hand with industrialization in the north. It continues to act as an institutional tool used to foster economic efficiency, manage capitalism, order social relations, and secure the reproduction of society (p. 88). The latter use is perhaps the most evident in the case of northern Norway, where the state sought to extend southern quality of life, education, productivity, culture, and equality to the periphery.

Northern Norway’s rapid development under the social welfare system was crowned by the establishment of the University of Tromsø in 1968. Few English-language academic sources

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5 Sør-Veranger is a municipality in eastern Finnmark, encompassing a number of small communities including Kirkenes, Bjørnevågen, Hesseng, and Sandnes.
exist that deal with the subject of UiT's establishment and current operations. The bulk of data for this project comes from interviews in the field and a handful of articles. Among the literature consulted on UiT, most notable is a chapter by Arbo & Fulsås (2002), in Nord and Weller's *Higher Education across the Circumpolar North*. In their chapter, Arbo & Fulsås describe the history and impetus behind the establishment of UiT. Additional information can be found in *The Role of Universities in Regional Innovation Systems – A Nordic Perspective* (Nilsson, 2006), as well as, *Coastal Finnmark, Norway: The transformation of a European resource Periphery* (Hansen, 1999).

Arbo & Fulsås focus exclusively on UiT in their chapter, tracing its origins within a larger history of higher education in Norway, which they briefly summarize. Like British Columbia, Norway was historically under the control of various colonial powers. British Columbia saw colonial influence from the British, Russians, Spanish, and Americans. While parts or all of Norway have been part of the Hanseatic League, the Danish Empire, the Swedish Empire, and Nazi Germany, Denmark was the most influential and long-term colonial master of Norway. The system of higher education in Norway was established while still in union with the Danish crown (Arbo & Fulsås, p. 46). Interestingly, many of the reasons for the establishment of a university in Norway in 1811 would be replicated in 1968. The authors write that the 1811 process was one of nationalization, while the 1968 process was one of regionalization.

Arbo & Fulsås also provide a definition of what constitutes northern Norway: the counties of Nordland, Troms, and Finnmark. Unlike British Columbia, there seems to be little administrative or academic dispute in Norway over where the north begins; though residents or communities may argue they are more ‘truly’ northern than an area slightly to the west or south. In European terms, this region is large and covers an area equivalent to Denmark, the
Netherlands, and Belgium combined (p. 47). Tromsø is the region’s largest city, with approximately 70,000 residents (Statistisk sentralbyrå), excluding the wider metropolitan area. The majority of communities in the north are considerably smaller than Tromsø, with 75 percent being under 5000 (p. 47). Arbo & Fulsås describe historical details, citing the destruction of the war and the subsequent reconstruction efforts as integral to the expansion of the welfare system and development to the north. While the north in general was targeted for redevelopment as early as 1951, it took time for many of the initiatives to be felt in more remote communities. The Norwegian state’s effort in the 1960s to extend development to the rural periphery followed a strategy of regional development that replicated the prior experience of the north as a whole (p. 47).

Despite a high level of emigration Northern Norway’s subsistence farming and fishing culture was quickly industrialized. A population boom occurred (p. 47). People began to cluster increasingly in regional centres as the economy transitioned into a service and post-industrial economy in the 1980s. The region was integrated into mainstream Norway (p. 48). As will be revealed in interviews referenced later in this paper, this represented a major change, both in the way northerners lived as well as the way they were treated by their southern countrymen. Arbo & Fulsås argue that UiT’s creation was the linchpin of this development process and the decision to create it was “one of the most successful government initiatives for the region” (p. 46). This opinion was commonly held with every person interviewed for this project, both in formal interviews and casual conversation. It is important to note that the university’s establishment is credited as a government initiative by Arbo & Fulsås. The authors’ work is slightly dated, due to the continued high pace of growth in Tromsø, as well as continuing evolution in the college system. However, they detail a number of colleges which exist as lower-tier education
institutions in the north. Two of these, Finnmark University College and Tromsø University College, have since been absorbed into UiT. The most recent merger of Finnmark University College with the university remains a controversial decision.

Both Nilsson, and Arbo and Fulsás, focus on the importance of the White Paper presented to parliament by the Ministry of Education in the 1960s. While some early statements of a desire for a university in the north had been made as early as 1918 (Arbo & Fulsás, p. 51), it was not until the White Paper was released that it was seriously considered as a potential policy decision. The paper proposed new universities in Trondheim and the north to complement the existing universities in Oslo and Bergen (Nilsson, p. 83). The government decided to begin planning immediately, despite the White Paper treating the idea as a more long-term future objective. The institution of the welfare state justified the call for extending access to higher education to the north. Both projects were proposed at once in order to avoid Trondheim becoming the sole focus of expansion efforts. These decisions demonstrate the desire to distribute public wealth more evenly and increase equality of opportunity in the country (p. 83). A public debate over the lack of medical professionals in the north coincided with the push for the university (Arbo & Fulsás, p. 51).

Tromsø’s possession of a number of existing scientific and education institutions made it a logical choice for the location of a northern university, though it was revealed in interviews that other communities and important individuals sought to establish Norway’s northern university in Harstad or Narvik. It is significant that before the government announced the need for a university in the north in 1962, northerners thought it would be generations before they would have their own university (Arbo & Fulsás, p. 52). Medicine and health care became the primary impetus and core rationale for the establishment of a university. This proposal was
resisted by professionals at medical schools in the south (Nilsson, p. 84), who thought the quality could never reach the levels at established schools.

Nilsson, Hansen, and Arbo & Fulsås detail the subsequent success and growth of the university as it gradually expanded its physical campus as well as its student body over the next decades. The growth patterns occurred in waves, rather than on a continual slope, and were affected by demand and the changes in the global and regional economy. The university was connected to the local economy quite early on and was organized during its formative years with an ambitious plan for interdisciplinary programming and enhanced student democracy. UiT was set aside to be a top-tier institution on the same level as the University of Oslo. As time has gone by, the university has normalized and the state has reduced its preferential treatment of UiT (Nilsson, p. 89, 91).

It should be noted that UiT did not develop according to a fixed plan or greater strategy, aside from the establishment of several crucial departments and schools, due to tight control from above. This has occurred even as the university has become increasingly similar academically to more traditional southern institutions (p. 91). Nilsson credits this process to the educational background and socialization of the staff, as well as harmonization with other institutions both within and outside of Norway. Recognition of prestige and imitation are also credited as factors influencing the move away from the experiments of the 1960s and 1970s at UiT. Interviews conducted for this paper confirmed Nilsson’s work and will be discussed below.

Authors discussing UiT as a primary topic frequently refer to its impact on the economic and social development of the region. In particular, Nilsson analyzes UiT as a tool of regional innovation and rates its success within the “Triple Helix” model used by economists. He argues: “As universities become more dependent upon industry and government, so have industry and
government become more dependent on universities” (p. 23). The reciprocal and symbiotic relationship between universities, industry, and government in the modern state has changed the way academics view their research. These three institutions maintain numerous contacts, but they also assume the role of each other, with universities creating research parks or industry building educational facilities (p. 24). Importantly, Nilsson explains: “The characteristics of a successful Triple Helix in one region may be of little relevance in another region. The models are primarily a heuristic approach to be used in the study of historical cases” (p. 24). He employs the Triple Helix in this manner in his analysis of the historical development of UiT.

While Nilsson rates UiT as successful within the Triple Helix model, this was not always the case. He describes the initial gulf between industry and the university in early years, with major geographic distance between corporate headquarters and the university, as well as serious ideological differences (p. 96). “Anti-capitalist ideology and rural nostalgia” made relations with business difficult until the 1980s. Later, relations between the university and science blossomed with science parks being established. Companies are now attracted to Tromsø because of the presence of the university’s scientific community and its pool of educated graduates. This scientific reputation and resultant industrial attraction may have also simply been a factor of time, as stated by Arbo & Fulsås (p. 60). They explain that new universities always struggle with credibility in their early stages, and those on the periphery face prejudices due to their location. This was not helped, as both Nilsson and Arbo & Fulsås described, by UiT’s early nickname as “the red university”.

Time has alleviated much of the instability, experimentation, and uncertainty present in the university’s early days. While the university has been a success in the long-term, it faces challenges to its status as a top-tier school. Virtually no professors leave Oslo for Tromsø, while
many have done the opposite (Arbo & Fulsás, p. 60). The need for the university to expand, specialize, and attract greater international involvement increasingly puts it in the same category as southern institutions. While authors writing on UiT praise its long-term success, it is important to note several key trends identified in the literature. The university was initiated primarily from the top down in Oslo, although it was supported by residents and officials in Tromsø. The university had a very experimental beginning and struggled to connect with industry or expand its student base. UiT is transitioning into a more traditional university role in Norway, while still maintaining a regional focus on the north and special government preference.

It is important to describe the picture painted of UiT in academic literature because it is deeply connected to an economic performance and development-based assessment. None of the articles or chapters consulted on UiT addressed its success purely on academic terms, but continuously sought to connect its success to regional development, social change, and institutional growth. The merits of the university are viewed in the existing literature against its material and social benefit to northern society as a whole, not to the students themselves or to the academic community. This may reflect the fact that existing literature is exclusively Nordic in origin, and analysis has been shaped by the authors' imbedded position in the welfare state, where public institutions are expected to serve as agents of social and economic improvement. Nord's analysis of the North American institutions, described above, also follows this pattern.

It is interesting to note that Nilsson recognizes the variable nature of the Triple Helix model in different regions, claiming that his preferential method of historically analyzing universities is contingent on individual circumstance. If we are to assess UNBC through the lens employed by Dahllof, Nord, Nilssen, Arbo & Fulsás, van Adrichem and other authors, it is necessary to accept the above qualifiers as integral to how well UNBC has followed in the
footsteps of the Nordic Model. However, as Nilsson demonstrates, the viability of this system of rating success may be inadequate.

Just how different the North American context is, and how similar UiT’s triumphs and struggles are to those faced by UNBC, create a conflicting pattern of standard objectives being pursued in often contrasting institutional, cultural and historical contexts. In the next section, this paper will address these similarities and differences in a comparative study. I will investigate how northern Norway and UiT have come to their present state, drawing on data gleaned from field research and semi-structured interviews. A discussion of British Columbia and UNBC’s success at following the Nordic Model, as well as an assessment of the viability of Nord’s classification system, will follow.

2.3 – The University of Tromsø: From Unlikely to Indispensable

The establishment of the University of Tromsø (UiT) was an unlikely event that went against pre-existing anti-peripheral sentiments in southern Norway at the time (Interview #2). In addition, its early years were marked by organizational experiments, which mixed faculty members of different disciplines into theme-based institutes (Interview #1). At a historical distance, it makes sense to read the foundation of UiT as coming directly out of Oslo, supported by visionary planners of the social welfare state. This is only one side of the story. Interviews with individuals who were present during the university’s early years revealed that despite long-standing desires by northerners, UiT was a somewhat unexpected accomplishment largely spearheaded by several people embedded in key academic and political positions.
A proposal for a university in Tromsø had existed since 1918, written shortly after the First World War by an official from Mo i Rana, a community in Nordland. Although new universities and technical colleges were established further south: A technical college in Trondheim – the predecessor to the Norwegian Institute of Science and Technology – and the University of Bergen in 1946, no action was taken (Interview #2). When proposals for a northern university were renewed in the 1960s, the concept was initially resisted. In fact, “[t]here was not only resistance, it was ridiculed” (Interview #2). Torstein Bertelsen, a native of the northern community of Harstad and professor at the University of Bergen, wrote a report in 1963 that described the demographics of doctors in Norway, noting where they were trained and where they decided to practice. After looking at the records for approximately 2,300 doctors, Bertelsen discovered that most practiced near where they identified as their hometown (Interview #2). He concluded that a university with a medical school was needed in the north in order to provide the region with proper medical services. This marked a beginning in post-war academic efforts to secure a university for northern Norway.

The push for a northern university amongst southern professionals was initiated by Bertelsen and two other individuals, one a pathology professor in Bergen and the other a high-level civil-servant in the ministry responsible for education and research in Oslo (Interview #2). The push for a university was focused on the proper provision of medical care to a chronically under-serviced and developing region of the country. UiT’s existence fueled the growth of Tromsø, pushing it to grow larger than the previously dominant Narvik (Interview #2). The most striking changes came with regional access to the training of professionals. As one individual described:
I came to northern Norway... just graduated in that very summer of 1968. That was my first visit to northern Norway, and it was a striking difference. It was a striking difference in many ways... the standard of living, simply the wealth of the communities. As a doctor, I saw, for instance, renal tuberculosis and stuff that I didn’t see in the southern part of Norway. Dental healthcare was horrible compared to what I saw in Bergen and Oslo (Interview #2).

The comparatively low standards of living in northern Norway at the advent of the university in 1968 coincided with the height of the Cold War. Older people living in the north reportedly commented at the time that they would prefer to be a part of the Soviet Union rather than continue to endure a lack of social services and development (Interview #2). Some northern Norwegians view the breakdown of trade and interaction with the Russians during the Cold War as a painful time, which interrupted normal commercial and cultural exchange (Interview #2).

Despite the government’s hesitance in the early 1960s to establish a university in the north, the project went ahead in tandem with the establishment of a university in Trondheim in 1968. Once the national government committed to establishing a university in Tromsø, it did not take its time or hold back on its commitment to the project. Education and research commenced while the facilities were under design (Arbo & Fulsås, 2001, p. 52). The medical school was quickly founded and began instruction, and has continued to grow in tandem with the regional hospital, now a university hospital that conducts research.

Throughout this period, the motivating impetus for the university was social justice and the reproduction of the welfare state following positivist science-based rationality (Tønnessen, 2014, p. 6). At the time, Norway was coming to the end of a long period where the Labour Party had enjoyed an almost uncontested domination in the legislature. The two decades following the Second World War saw social democratic order become entrenched into society (p. 6). The role of former Prime Minister Einar Gerhardsen and his Labour Party had a permanent impact on
Norway. This movement has been explained as a major justification for the establishment of the university, because, “[i]t was justice. It was an old vision. It was also seen by the parliament as a nice way of developing this region. And everything stated in in the discussion in the parliament that very day, we’ve done” (Interview #2). The concept that the university’s establishment was a fundamental matter of justice, that the state owed the people in the region a university, melded with the greater push for economic development in the peripheral north that came with the rise in influence of the Agrarian Party in 1965 (Interview #1).

The year 1965 represents a seismic shift in the Norwegian policy environment, a critical juncture that allowed for institutional change. An “uproar against centralization policies” (Interview #1) resulted in the election of the long-standing “Red-Green Alliance” – a coalition government between the working class Labour Party, the leftist Socialist Left Party, and the rural, farmer-supported Centre Party – which has continued to be a dominant force in Norwegian politics until the most recent election in 2013. The surge of support for the decentralizing agrarian-based Centre Party in 1965 undoubtedly helped cement the decision to build UiT. It was in this climate that the university was built, under a social democratic welfare consensus coupled with a strong rural movement to extend development and opportunity to the furthest peripheries of the country. As such, the individuals who arrived in Tromsø in 1968 were driven by a mission to transform the region, to create a vision independent from Oslo or Bergen for educational success in northern Norway. While the original goals of the university may be considered met by many, others believe UiT could have been something more (Interview #1).

In 1968, many of the young professors being hired to staff UiT had grown up under the strong social democratic consensus of the previous two decades. They brought with them both notions of equality and social justice, as well as an optimistic experimentalism in regard to
established academic norms. The first several years were a time of dynamism – both in the
determined persistence of the medical school and the enthusiastic experimentalism of the social
sciences and humanities. As one interviewee recalled, “[t]he first year was a kind of heavenly
mix of enthusiastic students and staff. But in six years’ time, you have to take care of six classes,
yearly classes in every subject, and much of this romantic potential of the first year dropped”
(Interview #1). As faculty began to settle into routines of teaching and research, their zeal for
unorthodox departmental organization and their expectations began to wane (Interview #3). By
1974, a level of frustration had begun to manifest itself amongst staff (Interview #1). The decline
and closure of the interdisciplinary fisheries department, which succumbed to lack of interest
among students and a loss of faculty to more traditional departments, is described as one
innovative concept that did not survive (Interview #1). The university’s growth and evolution
since the 1970s has resulted in the gradual normalization of its structure and faculty, while its
goals have remained regionally oriented in the north (Interview #1). The university was funded
largely by Oslo, but received significant symbolic support from Tromsø and the north. UiT has
embraced its regional identity and increasingly used it as a guide for research and branding.

While Arbo & Fulsås focus on the role Oslo played in UiT’s establishment, it is
important to note the considerable local effort that supported it as well. Northern residents
donated money to the cause of the university. In fact, “[p]eople gave their kroners, and one of the
leaders of the university hospital board, she always referred to how proud she was. She was a
little kid in the 1950s, living in Finnmark, and so they collected money for establishing the
University of Tromsø” (Interview #2). This occurred during the 1950s and 1960s, prior to the
announcement of the university by the government. This movement was described as being
“grassroots” in nature, combining initiatives of the northern population with political support in
the south. The push for UiT may therefore be viewed as less of an inspired political choice by the government than current literature suggests. This history is similar to that of UNBC. Residents across northern British Columbia signed a petition and donated $5 to support the idea of a university that would serve the north.

Perhaps more significant to UiT’s success in meeting Nord’s criteria as a Nordic northern university is the support given by Oslo in the years following its establishment. Funding for universities in Norway is almost exclusively provided by the national government, with 60 percent of yearly support coming in the form of “basic funding.” Another 25 percent is calculated on exam scores. Each semester completed by a student is worth a specific amount of money provided by the national government according to points awarded for examinations passed. According to one interviewee, achievement varies between departments, with dentistry and medicine doing better than social sciences and other departments (Interview #2). In the fall of 2013, the university’s funding was approximately 2.4 billion NOK. The remaining money provided is largely a result of research funding, from national and EU-based research organizations such as the Research Council of Norway and the European Research Council (ERC). This money is typically awarded on a competitive basis between the other universities in Norway. For instance, the national publication database, CRISTin, tracks publications per university. Universities are paid according to publication rates in peer reviewed journals (Interview #2).

However, this is a relatively recent policy, initiated in 2003 (Interview #2). It represents a less predictable form of funding than the base-level and exam funding that constitutes the bulk of money provided to universities like UiT. Approximately 500 million NOK was received last year for competitive-based funding. While some universities have stronger connections to private
funding sources like Statoil, UiT receives very little private funding (Interview #2). However, if we consider that UiT receives approximately 2.9 billion NOK per year in government and competitive research-based funding, this amounts to approximately $540 million in Canadian dollars, of which nearly $450 million is direct predictable funding from Oslo. This compares to UNBC’s stated revenue for 2013, which totaled approximately $107 million, approximately $58 million of which was in provincial and federal grants (KPMG, “UNBC Financial Statements”, 2013).

Even allowing for the fact that UNBC has a student body approximately one-third the size of UiT’s, the above figures demonstrate that in direct guaranteed yearly government funding, UiT has a significant advantage. That being said, it is important to note that UNBC received an additional $19 million in tuition fees in 2013 (KPMG, 2013). Norwegian students do not pay tuition. This could be considered a form of direct subsidies for individual students in Norway, or simply a lost form of revenue for universities. Yet due to the relatively high cost of living in Norway, especially in the city of Tromsø -- which has an extremely heated housing market (Interview #5) -- students often resort to loans to help finance their education even without tuition fees (Interview #2). However, students also receive government stipends depending on what they study and at what level. Many students finish their Master’s degrees with loans of 300,000 to 400,000 NOK ($58,000 to $74,000), which can translate into long-term debt (Interview #2). From this perspective, the financial life of a student at UiT may not be much different than that of a Canadian student at UNBC, and may be even more stressed depending on how much debt he or she incurs in the course of their education. By comparison, “[s]tudents in B.C. are expected to be nearly $35,000 in debt” after graduating from university (Mason, 2013). This figure rises when adding into consideration graduate or professional education. But a
cursory comparison of basic funding reveals that UiT itself benefits from significantly more government support than UNBC. Which, when coupled with its larger size, sets it apart financially.

The centralized influence over the university extends to its internal management as well. Norway’s high rate of unionization (Heidar, 2001, p. 109) and history of national support for labour rights has resulted in standardized rates of pay for certain professions. This stress on equality has meant that university professors in Norway are essentially all paid the same, following “national tariffs” (Interview #1). There is little difference between the pay of a faculty member of equal rank in Oslo compared to Tromsø (Kyvik, 2010, p. 1). Variations come in the way universities administer sabbatical arrangements. For instance, faculty members at UiT have a superior sabbatical arrangement compared to their peers to the south (Interview #1). After four years of employment, faculty members are automatically entitled to a full academic year sabbatical, fully paid. This represents the main difference between faculty at UiT and those working at the large southern research universities like the University of Oslo or the University of Bergen. In addition, the North American system of having tenured and non-tenured faculty does not exist in Norway, with the exception of temporary hires for leaves of absence or research fellows. In essence, “[y]ou only have fixed positions, life-long entitlement really – as long as you don’t commit a crime” (Interview #1). At UiT, professors are permitted to leave their positions for up to five years to work elsewhere before being required to return. A replacement must be hired, and replacement faculty act as untenured staff. But interviewees stated that untenured professors in Norway do not exist in principle (Interview #1).

The lure of a guaranteed job with little difference in pay from the south is a positive factor in attracting skilled educators to Tromsø. The variability in pay between universities in
Canada means that a university like UNBC exists on a hierarchy of pay rates with other institutions. For example, despite the low cost of living in Prince George, faculty at UNBC are known to receive considerably less pay than their peers to the south – a difference that has been described as a “vast gulf” by the president of the UNBC Faculty Association (Holler, 2014, p. 1). This difference amounted to an approximately 21 percent lower salary compared to sector-norms in 2010 (Binnema, 2014, p. 3). The long-term ramifications of lower pay amongst faculty at a university may have a number of consequences, as much as standardized wages do. On the other hand, Norwegian interviewees readily acknowledged that the high level of job security and non-merit based pay between faculty members can create a lack of incentive among staff. One interviewee described, “[t]he problem with the Norwegian system is of course that a tenured professor, or what we call a first lecturer, will be not to achieve more than a minimum standard. And how do you create incentive[s] so that the tenured staff and life-long contracts are really working?” (Interview #1). Whether having an unhappy and productive staff or content and less productive staff is better is difficult to answer. Yet it raises the question of what impact Norway’s regime of standardized pay and default benefits has in determining the shape of a university like UiT.

UiT’s staff profile has also recently shifted due to the rapid expansion of the university via mergers with a number of local colleges and school, including the University College of Tromsø, a music conservatory, and an independent school of fine arts (Interview #1; Interview #3). Most recently, the university merged with Finnmark University College, boosting the student body to approximately 12,000 students. These mergers have mitigated previous gaps in UiT’s programming and regional coverage, bringing it more in line with Nord’s four criteria for successful northern universities. Interviewees varied in their opinion on these mergers, with
some strongly opposed, others strongly in favour, and still others who had mixed feelings. As one interviewee stated:

Yes, we have swallowed the College of Finnmark, but not the Sami College [the Sami University College in Kautokeino]. The Sami College operates, but we have swallowed some institutions in Finnmark. I use this derogative term because I was very much against it, because I think regional autonomy should not be limited to the level of Tromsø (Interview #1).

While this individual was against the mergers, others stated it would allow students throughout the north to have better access to programs. The addition of the former Finnmark University College campus in Alta has allowed UiT to expand its regional presence beyond Tromsø in a way it did not beforehand. While classes and short duration programs exist in partnership with some small communities in the north, the bulk of UiT’s programs remain centralized in Tromsø, and now Alta.

However, one region in particular remains outside of the influence of UiT. Finnmark is commonly divided between west and east due its substantial size and difficult terrain. While west Finnmark is able to access educational services provided by the campus in Alta, east Finnmark remains relatively isolated. One interviewee from the far east of Finnmark expressed frustration with the lack of a regional campus, and pointed a finger at local authorities for not pushing the national government hard enough for funding to establish a permanent campus (Interview #4). Blame was also leveled at the centralizing drive of the management in Tromsø, who were described as wanting to “harvest students” from the area (Interview #4).

While officials have committed to building campuses at some point in Hammerfest and Kirkenes as part of UiT’s new Arctic University focus, it is unknown when that will occur (Interview #4). For places like Kirkenes, Tromsø is in some ways just as distant as Oslo, and acts
as a regional centre for smaller towns in the same way that Oslo does for Tromsø. Programs identified as being needed in east Finnmark may sound familiar: nursing programs, physician training, teacher-training, and language instruction in Russian and Finnish. While Svalbard, a High Arctic territory administered by Norway, has a campus of higher education, east Finnmark remains outside of the university system. The growth and independent evolution of the University of Nordland in Bodø has been seen by some as a direct protest against centralization occurring in Tromsø (Interview #4). The growth of Tromsø has caused other communities to seek to mimic its success. Tromsø’s bid to host the 2018 Winter Olympics was contentious and never passed national approval, but it sent a clear message in regard to the city’s ambitions. Meanwhile, other northern cities are attempting to stake out their own unique path, reflecting the strongly regional nature of economic development in Norway.

It should be noted, in relation to the above-mentioned mergers, that UiT is supplementing its already strong role in professional and science-based education by adding significant cultural and artistic education to its curriculum. By incorporating fine arts and music into the university’s course offerings, it is able to coordinate these educational paths with new interdisciplinary possibilities. However, unlike Nord’s assessment that Nordic universities excelled at encouraging significant social and cultural activity in their host communities, UiT seems to have had little to no artistic and cultural programs prior to the absorption of smaller local institutions (Interview #1; Interview #3). This and other aspects of UiT that seem to contrast Nord’s theory of the Nordic Ideal will be explored further below.

Aside from providing educational access to the residents of Troms region, perhaps the most successful of any aspect Nord identifies in his four criteria for successful northern universities has been UiT’s professional education – most notably its medical school. This was
identified by a number of interviewees as the most important aspect of the university (Interview #1; Interview #2; Interview #5; Interview #6). The medical school has existed from UiT's establishment and receives significant state support. Nearly half of the PhDs handed out at UiT every year are from the health and medical programs—totaling close to 50 individuals (Interview #1). Cardiologist and neurologists are trained at UiT, with one interviewee proudly declaring, "the best expertise is here" (Interview #2).

The medical faculty has operated as an anchor for the entire university and an easy way to justify and measure its impact. As another individual explained, "[i]t kind of started out with medicine, and then evolved and became bigger and bigger" (Interview #5). The university is now a hub for cutting edge Norwegian medical research, skill-intensive surgery, pharmacy research, and other training. It is also experiencing a rapid growth in engineering as it adapts to the expansion of petroleum industry in the city (Interview #6). UiT possesses a law school which offers graduate degrees in law to the PhD level, as well as a specialized Law of the Sea program. These programs clearly demonstrate Nord's argument that northern universities in the Nordic countries are excelling in a unique way at this criteria for success. How UiT compares to UNBC on this front will be addressed below.

In terms of assisting growth and diversification, the picture is more nuanced. UiT has had a historically difficult relationship with business, largely due to its small size and the initially strong leftist bent of the faculty (Nilsson, 2006). Only relatively recently has cooperation with the business and the industrial community begun to yield major results. One member of the local political elite spoke on the subject:

Well, actually, I think they're doing a very good job at the moment. We have challenged [UiT] in order to get closer to business, to make academia and business work along, and they have responded—[the university has] done that. I
guess you know that Tromsø is at the verge of entering the petroleum age (Interview #5).

Specifically, this individual was referring to the establishment of Aker Solutions—a petroleum engineering firm that is setting up major offices and operations in Tromsø, bringing in hundreds of new professionals (see: https://www.akersolutions.com/).

It took some prodding to convince university staff to work with the business community. This matches information provided by Nilsson on UiT’s gradual shift to more modern methods of university-state-industry cooperation. It was explained that:

There was a need of getting academia closer to business, and [to] make them see that if we cooperate, we get more understanding for the academic work we do, we get more results because what we do—they have played a very important role in getting Aker Solutions to Tromsø. They have said that we will facilitate, we will [establish] the studies that you need to get [employees], and that way the university grows and cooperates with the businesses and they grow too. So, it’s a win-win situation, and of course some people may argue that academia should be independent and do their stuff, but I don’t think that this is at the expense of independence. It’s just the natural way of developing a modern university (Interview #5).

This move toward closer cooperation with business represents a shift away from UiT’s historically leftist origins, and a preference for separation between university and private industry. The university has also attracted several major public bodies to Tromsø, such as the Norwegian Polar Institute (see: http://www.npolar.no). However, one interviewee suggested that the recent relocation of several businesses to the region is more a result of the demographic growth of Tromsø as a city (Interview #6). Aker Solutions and Kongsberg Satellite Services are major corporations that have chosen locate in Tromsø, but it is possible that the community’s growth and management is just as much responsible for their arrival as any individual effort on the part of the university itself. As was explained, there are few “big actors” in the region, few
large corporations, and as such the university’s cooperation with the private sector is somewhat limited (Interview #6).

This stands in contrast to remarks made by Nord on the situation in the Nordic northern universities. In the case of UiT, it is questionable how much the university has succeeded in facilitating diversification through direct actions. The strongest case for UiT’s success in economic growth and diversification comes from its long-term re-education of the local population, allowing students to enter public sector service careers in medicine, law, engineering, public administration, and other state-funded careers. In this sense, the existence and structure of the social welfare state in Norway has played a greater role in determining the employment rates and pay of locals. The university acts as a training arm, turning unskilled locals into skilled members of the public service sector, and perpetuating the social welfare model of development in the north, with continued support flowing out of Oslo to maintain UiT’s trajectory of facilitating regional development and growth.

Oslo’s long-term role to develop northern Norway into an extension of southern living standards has been tremendously successful. Previously strong perceptions of northerners’ lack of sophistication and education have been largely eradicated through the development centered on UiT. While northerners remain somewhat stereotyped by Norwegians (Interview #3; Interview #5), they have become integrated into mainstream society, with stronger bonds to Oslo and a stronger perception of their own capacity, especially in Tromsø. British Columbia has also struggled with cultural and social differences between north and south. UNBC was built to alleviate many of the same problems which were identified as troubling northern Norway in the 1960s. Yet Nord has stated that North American northern universities like UNBC have done a poorer job than their Nordic peers at addressing these problems. However, as we will see, how
UNBC compares to UiT in meeting the four criteria outlined by Nord may not be as straightforward as his analysis suggests.
Chapter Three: British Columbia

3.1 – Northern British Columbia

In order to understand the development of UNBC, it is necessary to consider the unique nature of northern British Columbia. For the purposes of this project, I chose to focus on the province of British Columbia due to its similar size, population level, and geography as Norway (Faa, 1995). The comparison between a nation-state and a province may seem out-of-place, but it was logical when considering the above commonalities. While Nord compares continental or regional education systems, I chose to focus on single universities. Post-secondary education is the constitutional responsibility of provincial governments in Canada; it is under control of the national government in Norway. In Canada each province has its own policies and norms in post-secondary education. It was therefore necessary to look at UNBC within the structures of British Columbia, while keeping in mind its place within the larger context of Canada. Whereas my comparative study focuses on UNBC and its role in northern British Columbia, similar institutions exist in other Canadian provinces and face many of the same challenges in serving the various “provincial norths” (Coates & Morrison, 1992). In fact, many of UNBC’s early professionals were drawn from similar institutions in Canada, bringing a set of policy expectations and an understanding of the provincial norths.

A study of northern British Columbia is the study of a peripheral and historically isolated region, conquered and settled by Europeans primarily for the means of resource extraction (Coates & Morrison, p. 34; Wonders, 1981). While British Columbia was one of the few western provinces to enter Canada with its northern territories in place, it took many years for these vast
landscapes to be opened up to settlement. Today, much of northern British Columbia remains inaccessible and sparsely populated. The province retains a resource-based economy. In their book *The Forgotten North: A history of Canada's provincial norths*, Coates and Morrison describe how the provinces of Canada participated in a kind of internal colonialism in the north, competing for control over territory and, in the case of British Columbia, even making attempts to annex federally-dependent territories like Yukon.

The provinces of Canada are administered from the south. British Columbia stands as an extreme example of this pattern, perhaps only matched by Ontario. It has been suggested that the more-densely populated southern capitals act as colonial centres, which actively discourage a wider northern solidarity by enforcing a regime of dependence on their northern territories (Coates & Morrison, p. 116-117). For example, few roads connect northern regions, with most transportation forced to travel through southern hubs. In British Columbia, the disconnect between north and south itself is accentuated due to an especially rugged geography (Halseth, 2005). Halseth argues that a division exists between metropolitan and non-metropolitan British Columbia – metropolitan British Columbia being the urbanized Vancouver-Victoria region and non-metropolitan British Columbia being almost every other part of the province (Halseth, p. 326-327). He notes that rural British Columbia is characterized by mountainous topography that limits connecting infrastructure between communities, isolating them into small “settlement nodes” (p. 326). Non-metropolitan British Columbia is effectively “hidden” from metropolitan British Columbia, with affluence, power, and population concentrated in the southwest. This has been a defining demographic trend throughout the province's history. With the metropolitan south accounting for 58 percent of the province’s population in 2001, Halseth explains, “[t]his
concentration of population and political power is geographically removed from the resource extraction communities and regions which drive the provincial economy” (p. 327).

Culturally, economically, demographically, and politically, southwestern British Columbia is increasingly driven by connections to the Pacific Rim while it grows in tandem with Seattle. The two cities are developing into a major economic hub. Greater Vancouver-Victoria, Seattle, Portland, and Eugene form the “Main Street” of Cascadia, a larger economic, cultural, and geographic region straddling northwestern United States and Canada (Cold-Ravnkilde, Singh, & Lee, 2004, p. 64). These cities are located relatively close to each other thereby facilitating connections, whereas their respective hinterlands have far less contact with each other.

Northern British Columbia’s reliance on external actors has included the occasional economic influence of Edmonton. Albertan actors have looked to northern British Columbia as a route to Asian markets and have invested in northern ports and facilities (Young, 2008). At the time of this project, the Alberta government continues to champion the Northern Gateway Pipeline, among others, as a way to ship Albertan energy products to Asian markers, via northern British Columbia.

The indigenous inhabitants of northern British Columbia, who have adapted to tremendous change in the space of several generations, are also disconnected from the south (Coates & Morrison, 1992; Harris, 2002). The majority of First Nations in northern British Columbia have no existing treaties with the government, and continue to exist in a legal limbo on reserves established in the last century or before (Harris, 2002).

The economic nature and history of northern British Columbia has led to the development of a scattered chain of communities largely tied to single-resource industries. These
communities have been typically dominated by large corporations with headquarters in Vancouver or overseas (Robin, 1973; Halseth, 2005; Young & Matthews, 2007; Hayter, 2000). The children raised in northern communities who sought higher education were forced to leave the north and travel to Vancouver or Victoria to attend university. The intellectual capital and elites of British Columbia have typically been clustered in the far southwest, a pattern mimicked, if perhaps not quite as severely, in other Canadian provinces. In the light of this power structure, UNBC’s origins can be seen as a reactionary attempt to stem the flow of out-going youth and create a local source of professional talent. The push to establish the university can also be seen as a reaction to northern British Columbia’s demand for legitimacy in the face of growing southern dominance.

UNBC may be described as a tool of decolonization, development, capacity-building, or all of the above. However, for the purposes of this paper, the fact that UNBC’s birth came from a grass-roots drive is the most significant aspect of its formation. UNBC was a locally conceived and spear-headed project (McCaffray, 1995, p. 294). Whether “local” in this sense applies to northern British Columbia or simply the Prince George region is debatable. Regardless, supporters of the university in its early days conceived of a post-secondary institution completely independent of southern institutions and control.

Residents of Prince George and the surrounding regions of Bulkley-Nachako, Fraser-Fort George, and the Cariboo had repeatedly failed to establish any degree-granting programs at the College of New Caledonia in the 1980s (McCaffray, p. 32). Cooperation with southern universities proved to be difficult, and the small changes that did come about were largely due to the actions of committed individual actors working within the existing institutional structures. There existed a belief that any proposal for a “University of Prince George” was doomed to fail
due to the low population of the city. Therefore, early proponents based in Prince George changed the definition of the university to a “northern” institution, extending their demographic support to over 300,000 people largely in order to make the proposal acceptable to elites in Victoria (McCaffray, p. 30-31). Whether UNBC now serves northern British Columbia or has become more akin to a University of Prince George is open to debate. McCaffray notes that other regions in northern British Columbia continue to harbour resentment toward the dominance of Prince George, perhaps most distinctly seen in the northwest (McCaffray, p. 31-32). Their strong sea and air communication links with the south coast and Vancouver reduce their reliance on Prince George as a northern hub. McCaffray recognizes the same colonial “divide and conquer” strategies identified by Coates and Morrison, by which Victoria is able to ensure continued rivalry in northern British Columbia (McCaffray, p. 31-32; Coates & Morrison, p. 60-62). However, it should be noted that McCaffrey’s statements are nearly 20 years old, and the situation in northern British Columbia may have changed in the intervening years as industry, demographics, and commercial patterns have shifted.

McCaffrey’s book remains one of the only existing published accounts of UNBC’s foundation and the struggle for its establishment. Another important resource is Urban Dahllof’s lengthy report, *Building a future of excellence: a university for northern British Columbia* (1989). Both documents address the geographic and demographic challenges facing any proposal for a university in northern British Columbia: the low population and the large distances between communities. While the introduction of broadband internet has since changed the nature of communication in the north, distance remains a challenge. McCaffray and Dahllof also address the deep need for a university amongst northerners at the time. As will be shown, many of the early concerns of activists in northern British Columbia were mirrored in the experience of
northern Norway. The primary difference in Norway's case may be the role played by southern officials in coordinating the construction of a northern university.

3.2 – UNBC: Origins

Within the North American context, the province of British Columbia was relatively insulated from the wider neo-liberal reforms occurring in North America and the United Kingdom. The rise of Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan, and Brian Mulroney in the 1980s, and the related swing to more classical economic policy was not fully expressed in British Columbian politics until the end of the 1990s. During the late 1980s, British Columbia was governed by the Social Credit Party, a loosely conservative populist movement that had been successful in the province since the 1950s. However, the party fell from grace in the early 1990s due to a conflict of interest scandal involving then-premier Bill Vander Zalm. The resulting win by the New Democratic Party (NDP) in the face of the collapse of the “Socreds” kept British Columbia isolated from the types of neo-liberal reforms being implemented in many other jurisdictions in North America. It was during this power transfer, from a conservative to labour-oriented government, that UNBC came into being. The political factor involved in the fortuitous establishment of UNBC has been acknowledged by those involved in its early planning (McCaffray, 1995). Although the Social Credit Party came to support the idea of UNBC at the very end of their tenure in power, they were decidedly against the concept of a university in Prince George as late as 1987 (McCaffray, p. 38). NDP support for the idea at the time was seen as “fundamentally a narrowly political one”, and not an expression of their ideological vision for British Columbia (p. 38). In other words, the support for UNBC was a pragmatic strategy on the
part of political parties during an election. The NDP and Social Credit Party hoped to gain votes in northern British Columbia by supporting the popular idea of a university in Prince George.

The movement for UNBC had grown out a long standing desire to see a university established in Prince George (McCaffray, 1995, p. 17-18). Land was set aside where the university is currently located in the 1960s, and attempts were also made by the Catholic Church to establish a private university in the area now known as College Heights (UNBC, “UNBC History”). While the College of New Caledonia (CNC) was successfully established in the 1960s, it never lived up to its proponents’ early dreams for an eventual move to university status (McCaffray, p. 17-18). The successful push for a university began at the local level in 1987, with a host of influential local figures drawn into a serious campaign that sought to attain provincial support for the idea of a university in Prince George. The process took approximately three years and involved regional fundraising to support a formal study, as well as a battle against employees of CNC who believed that the expansion of the college’s programming was a better alternative to the attempt at building a completely new university from scratch (McCaffray, 1995). By 1990 the Social Credit government had approved the university with Bill 40, the UNBC Act (UNBC, “UNBC History”). This act was implemented in the final months of the party’s last term in power, which represents an interruption in the “flow of historical events” (Hall & Taylor, 1996, p. 942), similar to UiT’s birth during a shift from centralizing Labour Party dominance to a Red-Green Alliance regime in the mid-1960s.

Therefore, UNBC came into existence during a “critical juncture” that interrupted a period of continuity, which created a “branching point” and a new path (p. 942) – a university in the north. The Social Credit Party sought to build support in the lead-up to the provincial election, and this pressure created a rare window for change. For the first decade of its existence,
the formulation and evolution of UNBC occurred during an uninterrupted period of NDP governments. While neo-liberal reforms did occur during this time, the government in Victoria was resistant to large scale neo-liberal policy such as that being implemented in Alberta during the 1990s. Tuition-rates were frozen throughout much of the 1990s and the government did not privatize BC Ferries, BC Hydro, BC Rail, other types of corporations being dismantled in other provinces. The NDP came under criticism for its budgetary deficits and its attempt to bolster the ship-building industry in the province through the local construction of government financed high-speed catamaran ferries.

The year 2001 and the election of the British Columbia Liberals represented another “critical juncture” in British Columbia, which arguably affected the development of UNBC. In the early 2000s, the newly elected Liberal government enacted major cuts to provincial spending, ending many of the government projects created by the NDP, privatizing BC Rail, raising tuition rates, and renegotiating major public employee contracts. In 2000, public displeasure at the lack of local healthcare professionals in the north reached critical levels. Over 6000 people gathered in a rally at the CN Centre in Prince George to show their frustration (UNBC, “UNBC History”). Public demands for local education of medical professionals resulted in the Northern Medical Program. This program was made an issue in the critical election of 2001, and garnered promises of support from the politicians seeking election. Communities around Prince George pledged support for the program, funneling money to UNBC to help with the establishment of the program in 2002 (UNBC, “UNBC History”).

Other changes affected university development in British Columbia in the early 2000s. Tuition fees jumped over 22 percent in 2002 and 33 percent in 2003, following the end of freezes put in place by the NDP during the 1990s (UNBC, “UNBC History”). As British Columbia
began implementing many of the reforms other North American jurisdictions had adopted earlier, the shape of the economy in northern British Columbia shifted. The end of "appurtenancy" in 2003 had a major effect on forestry-based communities in British Columbia (van Adrichem, 2008). Appurtenancy was a policy whereby forestry businesses were required to process a portion of the wood they cut within a certain distance of where it was harvested. The intention of this policy was to ensure equal distribution of jobs and financial spin-offs to the regions dependent on logging. The abolition of appurtenancy accelerated the trend of centralization in British Columbia's wood processing industry, allowing the consolidation of milling operations in regional centres, while many executives and white-collar jobs increasingly shifted to Metro Vancouver. Technological shifts also allowed for greater centralization, widening the gulf between the urbanized south-coast and the resource-dependent rural north.

Authors such as van Adrichem have advocated UNBC as a source of hope for the invigoration of the northern economy, seeing it as a lynch pin in future efforts to diversify and grow the economies of northern communities (van Adrichem, 2008). Van Adrichem points to the success of Nordic institutions at training local professionals and fostering new research, making the metaphor of investment in local universities as a form of "knowledge appurtenancy"—since people are the best resource the north has in the post-industrial globalized economy. His writings invoke the Nordic Ideal in a similar manner to Dahllof, Weller, and Nord.

3.3 – UNBC's successes and challenges

Nord's construction of a set of criteria to measure how well a circumpolar university serves its region helps him illustrate how North American universities in the north have remained
different – or even inferior – to their Nordic peers. But by keeping his comparison generalized, Nord sacrifices his ability to focus on the reasons for the differences. We can consider UNBC within the framework Nord provides: access to education; professional education and training; assisting regional economic growth and diversification; and encouraging new social and cultural development. According to Nord, as a North American institution, UNBC should be succeeding in undergraduate access while largely failing on all other fronts. However, since his assessment was published, a number of changes have occurred at UNBC.

While UNBC lacks several professional degrees, it now provides students with the ability to follow medical and environmental engineering tracks. However, it should be noted that both of these programs remain dependent on a partnership with southern-based institutions such as the University of British Columbia and the University of Victoria, with medical students required to spend part of their education time in Vancouver. As mentioned above, UNBC’s effort to offer more professional training came largely as a result of local activism. The province has offered some assistance in building facilities and supporting these programs, but has not made any plans to expand professional education at the university. The province chose to create a new law school at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops in 2011, making it unlikely that such a program would also be created at UNBC.

In terms of assisting regional economic growth and diversification, UNBC exists in a regional economy that continues to rely on resource extraction as a foundation, with Prince George acting as a hub for the mining, forestry, and energy economies of northern British Columbia. However, it is important to note that the university provides a local stream of post-secondary graduates who are having a sustained effect on the culture and labour profile of Prince George and northern British Columbia. Additionally, enrollment in post-secondary education has
risen in northern British Columbia since the establishment of UNBC, with the majority of graduates staying in the north and adding to the development of a skilled labour-force (UNBC, Update, 2013). Despite UNBC’s successes, it arguably fits in with Nord’s North American Model of universities re-enforcing local economic patterns. Forestry and raw resource exports remain a major pillar of Prince George’s economy. However, UNBC has had some impact on trends in innovation and high-skill service industries. The planned Master of Engineering in Wood Design degree offers potential future manufacturing possibilities for the region. UNBC’s push to innovate into green power and sustainability as a campus has involved local actors.

Additionally, the establishment of the medical school and the University Hospital of Northern British Columbia has increased the potential for local health science based research activities. The relatively small size and newness of the university has limited its ability to reconfigure the local economy. Additionally, the local and provincial governments have not attempted to initiate a planned coordination between the university and business. No provincial program exists to “reshape the economic patterns” of the north (Nord, p. 186).

Equally, UNBC lacks almost any form of social and cultural development influence in northern British Columbia. The university has no facilities or programs for the fine arts, performing arts, or music. The majority of social and cultural interaction with the community is currently undertaken by student organized clubs, partnerships with indigenous artists in First Nations Studies classes, or by other informal initiatives. While individual members of the university are actively involved in various community cultural and social organizations, there is no formal program to develop or train for related activities at UNBC. An attempt to build a Fine Arts program linked to Emily Carr University of Art and Design in Vancouver has since been suspended. UNBC conforms to Nord’s assessment that North American universities in the north,
“[H]ave demonstrated little sustained interest in investing in this vital form of social capital” (p. 186). Perhaps the strongest form of community outreach and interaction at the university has come in the form of sport, with community members showing support for soccer and basketball teams at the university by attending games. The construction of the Northern Sport Centre stands out as a successful form of social outreach at UNBC. The facilitation of physiotherapy, group exercise, recreational programs, and training facilities has allowed the university to reach out to the local population through open physical exercise programs and competitive team-based games which attract non-academic participants to campus on a regular basis.
Chapter Four: Discussion and Analysis

4.1 – Comparisons

Rather than refer to the concrete facts of individual northern Nordic universities, the many researchers who study university development in the north tend to homogenize them as a group, looking at common structures and patterns held by most northern Nordic universities. Often, a mere passing reference to the institutional structure and history of various Nordic states is mentioned. While Nord acknowledges the role social welfare based policy plays in the structure of Nordic universities, he attempts to paint all Nordic nations and universities with the same brush, which is understandable when attempting to formulate his argument. However, ignoring the context of each individual nation and history has resulted in an imperfect picture and the Nordic Ideal. Northern universities in any country are inseparable from the broader institutional context in which they are embedded.

Therefore, it is difficult to support the concept of imitating northern Nordic universities without also supporting Nordic ideological structures like social democracy, social welfare, and the concept of material equality as a form of scientific rational social justice. As seen above, these concepts were part of the driving motivation behind the establishment and continued support of UiT. The vast majority of the universities in northern Nordic states were created after the Second World War, when these countries were building social welfare systems. At the same time in British Columbia, the Social Credit government of W.A.C. Bennett promoted province-building, but with reliance on the participation of large privately-owned mining and forestry corporations, and a faith in free enterprise. In Norway, UiT has been governed and shaped in
accordance with the principles of the welfare state for its entire existence. Researchers at the Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education have stated:

In general, higher education institutions are deeply affected by their political, social and cultural environments. Situated in a social-democratic society, Norwegian universities and colleges have stronger traditions for implementing egalitarian institutional policy measures than in many other countries (Kyvik, 2010, p. 2).

This institutional environment has encouraged a standardization of practices across Norway, and includes private institutions. Kyvik writes: “Since 1996, public universities and colleges have been regulated by a joint act, which provides a common framework for the organization and governance of these institutions. Since 2003, this act also encompasses private institutions” (p. 2). The government in Oslo was convinced to build the university during a critical juncture, but this juncture existed within a social democratic consensus that remained largely unchanged. The juncture came when a shift occurred in policy from post-war democratic socialism to decentralist agrarian democratic socialism. UiT was born during a sustained period of increased public sector growth, as a new phase in the project of developing the nation through state-led welfare-based planned economics. UiT represented a new phase in this project, where the state worked to include the rural periphery in the wider social-welfare project.

This does not mean that UNBC and UiT cannot be compared, but it is important to consider that many of the criteria that Nord identifies where North American institutions like UNBC fail may be a direct result of differing institutional histories and ideological contexts. For example, UNBC has been consistently under-funded in comparison with UiT; while it may be tempting to point to the current oil wealth of the Norwegian state as an explanation for this fact, it remains a relatively recent phenomenon. Instead, it is more helpful to consider that Canada and
Norway may have differing concepts of equality and social justice. In Norway, equality is intended to be the end result of policy that works to offset disadvantages between individuals and regions. Active redistribution of wealth is seen as a way to level off the material differences that exist in society. Redistribution of wealth occurs between individuals, but also between communities and regions (Rose & Ståhlberg, 2005). This is sometimes seen as an offshoot of long-held Lutheran cultural convictions in the equality of the people (Tønnessen, 2014). It is also often portrayed as the product of a national narrative, which portrays Norway as a kingdom of citizen farmers and fishermen (Heidar, 2001). Indeed, the aristocracy has been abolished in Norway nearly as long as in the United States and France.

In comparison, equality in Canada, especially under laissez-faire concepts of “fair play”, are more likely to result in an equality of opportunity, but not outcome. Equality in this context means that every individual should have equal opportunity to succeed materially in the market. The government makes some efforts to assist individuals through education, healthcare, and law, but each individual is held more responsible for their own welfare. Forms of regional wealth redistribution in Canada such as federal transfer payments are arguably a relic of post-war nation-building projects that pre-date the revival of classical economic policy. Within provinces, little argument is made by officials for the right of peripheral northerners to an equal quality of life as southerners. In fact, it is more likely that the provincial government will centralize wealth in the south via corporate taxation and other methods, thereby using the rural north as a sort of colonial revenue source (Coates & Morrison, 1992).

Individuals who seek to avoid geographical or other uncontrollable disadvantages which might affect their material equality are left with the option to relocate. In the past, entire towns in northern British Columbia have disappeared with the complicity of the provincial government –
typically due to the loss of the primary local employer – with the population expected to relocate en masse (Leblanc, 2003). By contrast, Norwegian heavy industry has been largely state-controlled since the Second World War, and profit is often compromised in favour of maintaining high local employment (Sandvik, 2008). In other words, although the Norwegian state tends to treat individuals and regions unequally to achieve an equal outcome, North American regimes are more likely to treat individuals and regions equally while accepting an unequal outcome.

This sort of ideological difference and institutional environment may explain more about the comparative state of Nordic northern universities – particularly in Norway – than a simple observation of current activities and programs. It may be acceptable for a region to be less wealthy than another in North America, as long as the government feels it has committed equal resources on a per capita basis to each region. This also extends to democratic representation. Policies in Norway which accord peripheral regions with substantially higher levels of representation are based on notions of geographic equality (Rommetvedt, 1992). In comparison, whereas the Westminster system of parliamentary democracy practiced by Canadian provinces affords peripheral regions no special status, it is important to note that British Columbia uniquely affords some northern regions with exceptionally high rates of representation. Ridings such as Peace River South and North Coast have approximately 50 percent less population than the provincial average (British Columbia Electoral Boundaries Commission, 2008). British Columbia represents a special case in Canada in regard to electoral redistribution, partially as a result of the long-standing concentration of population in urban Metro Vancouver (Ruff, 1990, p. 52).
The impetus for strong peripheral representation in Norway is governed by notions of regional cooperation. Other practices make the Norwegian Storting stand out in comparison to British Columbia. For example, members of parliament (MPs) sit according to geography and not political party (Rommetvedt, 1992, p. 89). MPs sit in pairs, and may find themselves sitting next to a member of another party who represents a riding in the same county. Geography is given a more important role than partisanship in this system. The building itself arguably has an influence on Norwegian notions of regionalism (p. 89). With all the MPs representing the Troms region sitting together, they may be more likely to identify and act together on regional-based interests in the legislature.

Due to the different nature of how equality and redistribution are perceived and pursued in British Columbia, it is difficult to conceive of UNBC in the same light as UiT — as a facet of a larger plan to bring a peripheral region up to the same level as the south for social justice-based reasons. In fact, “[i]n the Nordic cases, it is very difficult to think about regional policies without reference to the development of the national welfare states” (Aarsæther and Bærenholdt, 2001, p. 21). In this context, UiT’s establishment can be considered part of a regional policy. As Nord identified, UNBC was not part of a regional policy, nor has it ever been part of any such policy. British Columbia lacks a ministry devoted to the north or to northern development. In a sense, UNBC is a product of the region, not the provincial government which offered late support for largely political purposes. The provincial government has historically seen the north as a source of raw resources; although Bennett’s push to develop the north may be seen as a more elaborate version of this trend, the implementation of his vision resulted largely in planned communities based around single-resource industry towns (Coates and Morrison, 1992; Robin, 1973). This policy trend continues today with the current government’s drive to build a Liquid Natural Gas
(LNG) export-based economy in the north focusing on the export of raw resources to Asian markets. The investment in port infrastructure in Prince Rupert (Young, 2008), the support for continued petroleum industry activity in the Peace Region, the support for new mines in the province, and other initiatives demonstrate that the province continues to view the north as a source of resource wealth. Far less effort is invested in promoting the growth of knowledge or service-oriented economies in northern British Columbia. In this light, the provincial government has made little effort to utilize UNBC directly as a tool to develop the region, leaving it to evolve with fairly static levels of funding.

Yet despite all these ideological differences, it is possible that UNBC may achieve many of the same goals as UiT, given enough time and aggressive local support. By striving for a Nordic Ideal, academics and officials have created a unique institutional environment within the wider superstructure of the neo-liberal “experiment” in northern British Columbia (Young & Matthews, 2007). In essence, a transient institutional link between Nordic concepts of social welfare in education and UNBC was created during the university’s foundation when the decision was made to hire Urban Dahllof as a consultant. Dahllof’s Swedish origins and his decision to recommend a university modeled on northern Nordic schools (Dahllof, 1989) established a link between UNBC and an external institutional norm. This was reinforced by the selection of Geoffrey Weller as the first president of the university. Locally, many northerners have now been made aware of alternative institutional environments and what is possible for peripheral regions. However, UNBC cannot escape its institutional soil, the structure of British Columbia’s economy, history, and public policy exert a continual influence on the university, wearing down the initially strong connection to the Nordic Ideal.
4.2 – Institutional Context

As noted in Chapter Three, UNBC conforms to Nord’s assessment that North American universities do not fulfill the four major services they have been called upon to provide to their local regions. He claims that the Nordic Model has “produced the largest number of successes” (p. 185). However, by choosing to group universities together into broad categories, Nord oversimplifies the comparison. For instance, in pointing to the lack of social and cultural programs in the North American Model, Nord may be correct in his assessment of UNBC but not for a university like the University of Alaska Fairbanks, which operates a department of art, a department of theatre, and a department of music. Likewise, when he claims that Nordic universities have “provided vibrant social and cultural development” (p. 185), Nord seems to have taken his evidence selectively. UiT’s current arts and cultural programs largely stem from the absorption of smaller regional schools – something that occurred after Nord published his book (Interview #1, Interview #3). While many of Nord’s observations are accurate on a general level, he did not fully appreciate the fact that there is a wide range of “success” between Nordic institutions, as well as between those in North America.

Other factors play an equally important role in the success of a northern university: institutional context and history, the age of the institution, and basic funding. When these factors are considered, it is difficult to say whether the Nordic Model and North American Model can be separated from the wider context of their institutional history and environment. Indeed, Nord notes that “[i]n the space of four decades it [the Nordic Model] has brought about major change in the educational opportunities in the northern regions of Norway, Sweden, and Finland” (p. 185). The fact that many Nordic universities have existed for at least four decades – a span
considerably longer than most of their North American peers - has had a major impact on how much they have been able to accomplish. It is relatively unclear whether Nord’s definition of the Nordic Model is in reference to the achievements of universities, or to the achievements of the state. Nord creates a useful typology of circumpolar universities, but does not offer an explanation or theory as to why these universities differ beyond a basic description of several important variables.

Nord does not entirely ignore historical the institutional context in his description of the North American and Nordic Models. Rather, he identifies three “variables”, which he detaches from the wider historical, cultural, and political environment of the Nordic nations: A guiding transformative philosophy of university development and community growth, comprehensive and integrated planning, and resource allocation (p. 187-189). Nord does not explain that the “guiding transformative philosophy of university development and community growth” in a country like Norway is in fact an expression of a political ideology nurtured and consistently enforced not just in university development but in every aspect of society, from gender rights to economics to religion. Social democracy in Norway evolved out of a pre-war revolutionary form of socialism and mixed with a long-standing cultural reverence for the rural labourer. Norwegian state policy concerning university development and community growth is inseparable from a general consensus on the importance of material equality as a form of social justice.

Likewise, comprehensive and integrated planning is a product of the same ideology. Few private institutions were left untouched in the post-war years, with most of them being brought under the management of the state, including religious schools and teacher-training colleges (Tønnesen, 2014). Planning is integral to an economy based on social democratic principles, with the state demanding ownership of the country’s core industries. When Nord refers to the
Nordic states conducting, “careful study and analysis of the problems and issues related to northern community development” he does not mention that these states – especially Norway – operated within an ideology of positivism (Tønnessen, 2014, p. 6). The Labour Party of Norway operated with a faith in the power of modern science, believing that it should govern planning and the organization of society.

Resource allocation is the final variable used to explain the differences between the Nordic Model and North American Model. Nord criticizes the North American tendency to create a northern university for as little money as possible, with money only coming in small bursts to meet immediate demands, and no consideration for comprehensive planning (Nord, p. 189). With little allusion to the differing political ideologies between North America and the Nordic nations, this description presents North American governments as being poorer managers and planners. Nord plays little heed to the system of social democracy, the fundamental belief in equality, and the national history that guides Nordic policy toward different ends.

North American spending is increasingly governed by more neo-liberal market-based logic, with governments pressured to minimize spending and taxes in order to maximize the freedom and potential of the private sector. The state aims to retain a level of flexibility in budgetary considerations. By contrast, Nordic social democratic states have traditionally viewed the market as secondary to general welfare (Bjerve, 1959). Nations like Norway are more willing to commit disproportionate amounts of public resources to a region with a small population in order to equalize wealth levels and ensure a good home and job for every citizen (Tønnessen, 2014). Universities in Norway that were built after the Second World War have acted as manifestations of this goal, often receiving extra funding in order to compensate for their geographic disadvantage (Arbo & Fulsås, 2002, p. 53). While UNBC also receives extra funding
in comparison to southern institutions on a per student ratio, the motivation behind such funding is inherently different.

By detaching the above three variables from their institutional contexts and presenting them only as products of differing policy or management choices, we limit our ability to properly understand how a university like UNBC may evolve differently than UiT. UNBC is still relatively new, even in comparison with the youthful UiT and other northern Nordic universities. Its influence has grown, with the university gradually forming new programs and initiatives in coordination with the local community, such as the Northern Medical Program, as well as internships in local government management, planning, and economic development. Campuses were established, with UNBC operating regional campuses in Fort St. John, Terrace, and Quesnel. UNBC also cooperates to provide on-site education on Nisga’a territory.

UNBC is arguably doing a better job of regional access to education than UiT, which remains inactive in large sections of the region it claims to serve. The priorities of North American and Nordic societies may differ, and their northern universities will grow differently as a consequence of alternate values. UNBC may simply be taking a different path toward a future similar to its Nordic peers. When we consider the difficulties faced by UiT in providing some of the four major needed services identified by Nord, it appears that even a Nordic university struggles on its path of growth. It is also clear that money accelerates the speed of a university’s growth and ability to achieve its vision. While it is impossible to know what UNBC will look like when it is the same age UiT is now -- in 2036 -- we can reasonably assume the university will have made significant advances toward providing more access, professional education, economic transformation, and cultural development in the region. Whether these developments will mirror the Nordic Model defined by Nord is a matter of perspective. UNBC does seem to be moving
toward the achievements made by its Nordic peers, but is struggling in the face of an incompatible institutional environment. Efforts to establish cultural programs have floundered, faculty has voiced its displeasure with comparatively low wages, and the Northern Medical Program remains dependent on southern institutions.

Many of UNBC’s goals are similar to those of UiT in its early years. The difference in British Columbia is that UNBC’s goals are not supported in the same way by the provincial government, which has proceeded to fund the university at a minimal level. New programs are difficult to establish without government funding and support. Victoria continues to express more interest in developing the resource-wealth of northern British Columbia, while the development of a knowledge economy gets forgotten. Institutionally, the university remains isolated from the province’s view of what should be expected in the north. As time has progressed, UNBC has grown to accept its place in British Columbia. With the sudden addition of five new universities to the province in the last decade, UNBC’s voice has been diminished from its original place as one of only four provincial universities.

UNBC had a Nordic philosophical genesis with a persistent North American influence. It is a hybrid with a spiritual ideology running counter to the reality of the dominant social institutional norms in British Columbia. This is a unique duality. UNBC could take two potential paths: It could succumb to its ideological environment, or maintain its Nordic idealism — influencing local and provincial policy and expectations in the north. Regardless of whether the Nordic Model actually exists on a case-by-case basis, its idealization has affected the development and ambitions of UNBC. Fiscal limits and a gradual watering-down of the original goals of UNBC’s proponents may eventually end this influence. It is up to future leaders whether
or not the Nordic Ideal is a vital model for UNBC to strive towards within British Columbia’s institutional environment.
Chapter Five: Conclusion

UNBC has not lived up to all of the goals set for it, as described by Dahllof and McCaffray, and echoed in Nord’s description of the four vital services a northern university should provide. While UNBC made serious efforts to follow a Nordic Model, it has struggled to mimic the archetype seen by many of its early academics and leaders as the best possible path. By studying UiT as a comparative case study of a Nordic northern university, it was possible to evaluate UNBC’s progress against an actual peer. Interestingly, UiT has also struggled to fully live up to the Nordic Model, at least until the last decade. However, Nord is accurate in his assessment that Nordic universities come closer than North American universities in providing four essential services for their home regions: improving access to education; providing professional education and training; assisting regional economic growth and diversification; and encouraging new social and cultural development.

In nearly all of the above tasks, UiT outperforms UNBC – the only possible exception being access. However, if we look back several decades, UiT failed to provide adequate social and cultural development by Nord’s description, and did little to transform the local economy apart from educating and training locals for new jobs. UiT has excelled in professional education and has made rapid and consistent improvements in all four of the above tasks during the course of its existence. Information gained from interviews and literature suggest that the disparity between UNBC and UiT’s rate and pattern of progress is due less to a difference in goals than a strong difference in institutional environment and history.

By comparing UNBC and UiT within their broader institutional contexts, it is possible to understand why UNBC’s development has not proceeded far along the Nordic path. It is not a
question of a Nordic versus North American model of university planning and development that explains their differences, but a difference in national ideologies, regional policies, economic structures, and cultural expectations - in short, a difference in the institutional context. When Nord claims that three variables can explain the differences between North America and the Nordic nations, he does not connect these variables to the larger picture. The variables he identifies are: A guiding transformative philosophy of university development and community growth, comprehensive and integrated planning, and resource allocation (Nord, 2002, p. 187-189). All of these variables are normal parts of an ideally performing social democratic welfare state. Classical economic neo-liberalism, which has been popular in North America since the late 1970s, is not given to state-dominated planning of development, state re-distribution of resources, or philosophies of community growth requiring the material intervention of the state. For these reasons, the difference between UNBC and UiT cannot be explained by looking at the actions of the government as much as it can by looking at the historical and institutional norms established in British Columbia and Norway over the last several decades.

The realization of UNBC’s founding dream has been deeply affected by British Columbia’s institutional norms. As such, a hybrid situation currently exists, where UNBC’s leadership has struggled to realize the university’s long-term goals in the face of underfunding. Nordic institutional concepts mix with a North American institutional reality. Leaders and academics at UNBC who are familiar with the Nordic universities in the north are confronted by a situation at home that does not measure up. Whether it is possible to mimic the accomplishments of the Nordic system in British Columbia is debatable, and a potential subject for future research which could look at universities like the University of Alaska Fairbanks as an example of a long-term objective based on North American norms. It is possible that the flame of
Nordic Idealism will go out at UNBC, and the university will become a smaller extension of the provincial system of higher education with a curious and idealistic history. Many universities have had unique ideological roots, which faded over time in the face of powerful institutional influence. Simon Fraser University's early years as a radical leftist campus and UiT's own early history of academic experimentation and socialist sympathies serve as examples of early diversions from the institutional norm that were unable to survive the passage of time.

Although time may or may not smooth out the differences between UiT and UNBC, funding undeniably represents one of the most major immediate material variances between the two universities. Those who would wish to see UNBC provide more of the same services as UiT or other northern Nordic universities would find it difficult to change the institutional norms of British Columbia and Canada. However, UNBC retains its dream of a Nordic Ideal for the present – as illustrated by attempts to grow international enrolment, establish medical programs, and expand engineering course offerings. Were UNBC to receive additional funding, it is possible that significant progress could be made in meeting more of its original goals, such as the provision of engineering degrees, additional PhD programs, a more developed medical program, a fine arts program, or additional cooperation with industry. Within the North American context, the university is unlikely to see a burst of additional funding from the state. The tradition of private donor support for higher education in North America could be one solution to consider for those wishing to expand UNBC's role in the north. Ironically, this would move the university away from the Nordic Model, while allowing it to pursue some of the same end-goals.

UNBC may be forced to move away from the Nordic path of university development in the north, but it is destined to continue to evolve as an institution, changing the demographic and educational patterns of Prince George and northern British Columbia. Its mere establishment has
forever altered the trajectory of the region, demonstrating that the impact of a university on a population over time is significant. Whether UNBC decides to try and follow a Nordic path or embraces a purely North American set of expectations, the university is still destined to positively affect the local community. It is up to future leaders to decide how UNBC can best do this.

It is hoped that this paper will help such leaders make decisions regarding the development of UNBC and northern British Columbia. Future research could contribute to this project. A quantitative based comparative study between UNBC and its circumpolar peers is badly needed. It would be extremely useful to be able to refer to a collection of comparative data sets that analyzed local purchasing power, costs of living, university wages, research budgets, private partnerships, tuitions, student numbers, costs per student, and other topics. Qualitative research comparing the progress of northern universities in North America is also needed. It is evident that different regions of North America are developing their northern universities with differing priorities. It would be useful to consider how UNBC is performing in relation to its peers within a similar institutional context.

As UNBC approaches its 25th anniversary, university leaders must remember the origins and goals that accompanied the push to found the university. They must also consider the future of UNBC, considering what direction it will take, and whether or not those goals set over two decades ago are still relevant. This project seeks to illustrate how well UNBC is doing at meeting the goals and ideals set out for it during its early years, but not to state whether those goals are the best choice for the university in 2014 and beyond. By looking back to the early Nordic connections established during UNBC’s foundation and its subsequent evolution as a university, it is hoped that readers will appreciate the remarkable success of UNBC in the face of unlikely
odds, and carefully consider the future of the this immensely valuable common asset that possesses incredible potential.
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