

**‘The Arctic on Thinner Ice’:
First International Symposium of the Nordic Arctic Research Programme
Thule Institute, University of Oulu, Finland, 10–11 May 2001**

The international symposium on ‘The Arctic on Thinner Ice,’ held in May 2001 at the Thule Institute, University of Oulu, was attended by more than 100 researchers interested in the predicted changes in the northern regions and the Arctic, which will affect both nature and the prerequisites of human presence. Research findings have shown that the northern climate is getting warmer, but what will be the consequences of this warming? Are we already seeing signs of this change in our natural environment? What will be the significance of these changes for northern peoples? These were some of the major questions on which the symposium focused.

Selected papers from the first symposium are now published in this issue of *Polar Record*. These papers form an essential addition to the discussions that relate to those rapid changes in natural systems that are having — and will have — consequences to livelihoods in the Nordic Arctic. Mark Nuttall, professor of social anthropology at the University of Aberdeen, delivered a stimulating opening lecture at the symposium on the environmental–social changes in the Arctic. The other papers in this issue represent the themes of the symposium: natural processes — land, sea, and atmospheric interaction including a consideration of the history of our climate and environment; biological diversity and environmental threats in the Arctic, with examples of plant response to UV radiation; and consideration of living conditions and social change in the Arctic.

The two-day multidisciplinary conference was arranged by the Arctic Research Programme of the Nordic Council of Ministers in co-operation with the Thule Institute at the University of Oulu. The main sponsors were the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Academy of Finland. The

aim is to arrange these symposia annually during the span of the Nordic Arctic Research Programme as a forum for researchers, decision-makers, and students in order to update their knowledge on current Arctic research. The Second International Symposium of the Nordic Arctic Research Programme was held in May 2002 in Akureyri, Iceland, under the theme ‘The Arctic in the Anthropocene: the North Atlantic Arctic in Focus.’ It is expected that contributions from this symposium will also be published in *Polar Record*.

Arctic research is both scientifically and politically important, and the level of public interest in Arctic matters is high. We hope this issue will contribute to discussion on modern Arctic issues relevant for today.

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