

*Kanaka: The Untold Story of Hawaiian Pioneers in
British Columbia and the Pacific Northwest*

Tom Koppel

Vancouver: Whitecap, 1995. 152 p. Illus. \$14.95 paper.

By R.W. SANDWELL, *Simon Fraser University*

BC HISTORY HAS CHANGED. Until quite recently, only the public and political activities of White adult males fell within its purview. Over the past two decades, however, the province's history has expanded to include the experiences of a much wider spectrum of society, and, as a result, more varied interpretations of social and political relations are becoming common. As the Forum in the Autumn 1996 edition of *BC Studies* suggests, the growing complexity of the province's history is stimulating lively debate about the ways in which class, race, gender, colonialist discourse, and other relations of power can bring these newly emerging people and experiences into better focus. Tom Koppel's *Kanaka: The Untold Story of Hawaiian Pioneers in British Columbia and the Pacific Northwest* reflects this interest in ethnic diversity. Unfortunately, because the Hawaiians who appear in its pages are too often left stranded outside of descriptive or analytical contexts, the book also provides a timely reminder that both description and analysis are needed to render the experiences of the past into meaningful and significant history.

This popular history looks at the lives of the Hawaiian "pioneers" who first arrived in the Pacific Northwest in the early nineteenth century to work as labourers in the American and the British fur trade. Koppel explores their varied living and working conditions from Astoria to Fort Vancouver, and

from Forts Stikine and Simpson to Langley and Victoria. Their important contribution to whaling, sealing, and fishing on the coast is also described. When work in the fur trade and related industries declined, a number of Kanakas settled in northern Washington state. When they were prohibited from taking up land south of the forty-ninth parallel in the early 1870s, some families moved north. The second half of the book examines the areas of Hawaiian settlement in the Lower Mainland and the southern Gulf Islands.

Koppel has painstakingly traced the lives of the families, many comprised of Hawaiian-Aboriginal marriages, who took up land and made a living from both the land and the sea in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The research difficulties here should not be underestimated: in documents in which Hawaiian names seldom appear twice with the same spelling, tracing families over time and in different places requires considerable skill and patience. Koppel describes the cultural and familial context of Kanaka society up to the present day, providing abundant details about particular individuals as they became integrated into BC society.

Although the book gives an overview of the "untold story" of the Hawaiian presence in the Pacific Northwest, the story that emerges is, unfortunately, limited in scope and significance by the author's narrow approach to his subject. His uncritical reliance, in the first half of the book,

on the writings of Hudson's Bay Company officials and missionaries is probably responsible for the hollowness of the Hawaiian experience revealed in these pages. This is very much the story of Hawaiians as seen by nineteenth-century Europeans. These early Hawaiian arrivals seldom transcend their role as amusing, primitive caricatures within the colonialist discourse. Like nineteenth-century writers, Koppel seems to have little interest either in the world that the Hawaiians left or in their reasons for leaving: their motives, beliefs, fears, and joys remain as opaque to the reader as they did to their nineteenth-century observers.

Even when Koppel draws on oral history sources to explore a more Hawaiian-centred view of their history in the second half of the book, his exploration of family, economy, and culture is constrained by his failure to contextualize this population within broader frameworks of Canadian, British Columbian, or Hawaiian history. There is simply not enough historical context to allow us to understand the behaviours he describes. Descriptions of lives marked by violence, drunkenness, racial intermarriage, and high rates of mobility and mortality are presented haphazardly throughout the book. Because we have no idea how these behaviours related to other Hawaiians, Aboriginal peoples, or BC immigrants, it is difficult to understand their meaning or significance. Why did they drink so much? Why did they take up land rather than move to cities? What did the luaus mean to their society? Why did so few women emigrate to British Columbia?

The problems of interpretation created by poorly articulated historical contexts are exacerbated by the

weakness of historical analysis. Analysis and explanation are seldom offered, and, when they are, they tend towards historical determinism in lieu of any other theoretical models. Appalling working conditions, for example, which have provided the focus for considerable debate and discussion about race, class, and gender throughout BC historiography, are naturalized in a way that removes them from the realm of historical significance: Koppel argues that if Kanakas accepted these conditions, then they "must have been acceptable by the yardsicks of the time and compared to opportunities at home in Hawaii" (p. 27). Discussions about the inequality that clearly permeated the lives he describes are limited to descriptions of the "pecking order" that ranked Hawaiians above Native peoples and below Whites, and a whole literature about the meaning of race and class in British Columbia is ignored. Violence, work, leisure activities, family, and cultural traditions beg to be interpreted within specific contexts. Without these contexts it is impossible to ask questions of central importance to our understanding of history: Why did these people live as they did? What sense did they make of their own lives? What did their presence mean in British Columbia?

Although *Kanaka* contains some solid and difficult research concerning the Hawaiian presence in British Columbia, it fails to provide the clear historical lens needed to both see and understand the Hawaiian experience. As this book is grounded in neither Hawaiian nor BC society, its significance remains obscured within a context that seems to be exclusively defined by, and relevant to, oversimplified personalities.

*Cheap Wage Labour:
Race and Gender in the Fisheries of British Columbia*

Alicja Muszynski

Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996.

Maps. 314 pp. \$44.95 cloth.

BY JOHN LUTZ, *University of Victoria*

THIS BOOK WILL be of interest to scholars of BC's political economy, and not just for what it reveals about the province and its fishery. Muszynski uses the shore fishery as a starting point to revise Karl Marx's labour theory of value (LTV) so that it better explains why workforces have been segmented along lines of race and gender.

The lack of accommodation of race and gender are two weak points in Marx's LTV which argues that the value of any commodity depends only on the amount of labour time needed to produce it "under the conditions of production normal for a given society and with the average degree of skill and intensity of labour prevalent in that society" (*Capital*, vol. 1, p. 129). Muszynski points out that Marx largely ignored women's unpaid "re-productive labour" and that the labour of women, children, and non-Whites was already devalued before it was drawn into capitalist work relations. Both capitalists and White male workers used these pre-capitalist forms of exploitation to try to improve their respective positions in workplace bargaining.

This point is a contribution to the LTV, but there is something pyrrhic about it. The LTV has numerous other problems in addition to its failure to acknowledge the role of race and gender — problems that have caused many Marxists to abandon this part of Marx's theorizing. Taking only one

of these, Marx himself raises the question of whether the LTV can be usefully applied in a cross-cultural situation.

According to Marx, labour value is unique to "a given society." BC's shore-fishery existed, as Muszynski shows, at the intersection of Aboriginal, Asian, and European societies. The components of labour value — skill, intensity, and organization of labour — vary from society to society, so it becomes impossible to talk about a consistent value of labour when goods and labour are exchanged between societies. Even Marx himself would have admitted that many of his assumptions are problematic in an intercultural context.

Unfortunately, Muszynski's thoughtful examination of the interaction of race and gender in the workplace is saddled with theoretical assumptions that are at odds with her case study. To make the case fit the theory, key historical details have been either assumed rather than investigated or shoe-horned to fit. For example, Muszynski assumes, as did Marx, that "labourers will not voluntarily approach capitalist employers, but must be forced by having their means of production wrested from their control" (p. 32). But a close look at BC history shows that Aboriginal peoples, a key element of Muszynski's cheap wage labour force, sought wage labour in the fisheries long before Europeans undermined their resource base. Although cap-

italists were buying Aboriginal labour as a part of their economy, Native peoples were selling their labour as an adjunct to their own prestige, or potlatch, economy. The non-capitalist reasons Aboriginal peoples had for going to work do not fit within the Marx/Muszynski framework.

There are other important gaps between theory and evidence. To make her point about the conjunction of capitalism and patriarchy Muszynski assumes that, before the arrival of Europeans, West Coast Aboriginal cultures were largely cooperative (pp. 25-26, 92) and non-patriarchal (pp. 38-9). Neither assumption is born out by a close examination of these slaveholding societies, where males held the economic and political power. To make the point that the industry needed cheap wage labour and so looked to Aboriginal and Asian cannery workers, she states that the wages paid to this racialized cannery labour were lower than were wages paid to the British labourers who bought the canned salmon (p. 47). In fact, the monthly rates paid to Aboriginal workers, \$40 to 60 per month in the early 1880s, far exceeded the \$14 average monthly wages of ordinary labourers in Britain. By important standards of comparison this was not cheap wage labour, and this fact undermines Muszynski's explanation as to why fishery labour was gendered and racialized.

The book has structural weaknesses as well. Muszynski's main critique of Marx is that he was not dialectical enough in his analysis and so did not see the effects of race and gender (p. 255). While Muszynski's book offers a remedy to this important shortfall, it is strangely lacking in dialectical

analysis itself. Her theory and her evidence hardly engage each other. The theoretical analysis, in two chapters, one at the beginning and one at the end of the book, is isolated from an essentially narrative account of historical events in the middle chapters. Since it is its theoretical framework that sets this book apart from other accounts of the industry, the narrative chapters themselves offer few new insights. The exception is Chapter 5, which examines the unionization of the shore workers after 1931 — an important topic neglected in other works. Here, the author gets away from the government reports and secondary sources that inform the other narrative chapters and asks questions about how workers themselves thought of, and used, categories of race and gender. This chapter is built on primary research in the United Fishermen and Allied Worker's papers; their organ *The Fishermen*; and the business papers of a prominent company, J. Todd and Sons.

By the time she reaches the end of the book, Muszynski appears to be reassessing her original problematic. What began as an attempt to refine Marx's LTV concludes: "What we need is not more grand theory but analysis that takes into account the diversity and complexity of lives as people live them from day to day. This is the feminist project — not to discover *the* one theory that will explain everything" (p. 257). Had she begun with diversity and complexity and re-examined, rather than refined, the grand theory known as Marx's LTV, the author would have contributed a great deal more to our understanding of race, gender, and capitalist relations in the BC fishing industry.

*Working the Tides:
A Portrait of Canada's West Coast Fishery*

Peter A. Robson and Michael Skog, eds.

Madeira Park: Harbour, 1996. 216 pp. Illus., maps. \$34.95 cloth.

The Fraser River

Alan Haig-Brown

Madeira Park: Harbour, 1996. 200 pp. Illus., maps. \$49.95 cloth.

By SUSAN STACEY, *Richmond, British Columbia*

WE'VE ALL HEARD the laments of expatriate British Columbians, longing to return to life as it's lived nowhere else in Canada. When pressed to specify just what they miss so keenly, they often wistfully identify some aspect of the province's aquatic landscape. British Columbia's ocean-front and its rivers and lakes have a huge influence on its citizens' working lives, leisure plans, and spirituality. Two recent offerings from Harbour Publishing explore how this wild water defines our provincial psyche.

Working the Tides: A Portrait of Canada's West Coast Fishery is a collection of forty-seven slice-of-life narratives depicting BC fishers and their work. Editors Peter Robson and Michael Skog are both fishers who write about the fishery and former editors of *Westcoast Fisherman*, a popular trade journal serving BC's commercial fishing industry. For the past decade, *Westcoast Fisherman* has created a forum for "inside-the-skin" writing to balance the business and political angles that dominate reporting on this sector. Robson and Skog gleaned all but three of the book's selections from the magazine's archives.

The articles, which average three pages each, are fine examples of mari-

time storytelling. Most are personal anecdotes, some are creative non-fiction. The writers/storytellers (some accounts are retold by professional writers) are of both genders and represent many ethnic and age groups. The book is divided into sections based on the type of fishing technique used by the subject of the article: gillnetting, salmon seining, herring seining, groundline fishing, trawl fishing, jigging and trolling, and dive fishing. While this type of organization is a great aid to readers unfamiliar with the fishing industry, there is a sense that this is a book by fishers for fishers. Trade terminology is not explained, there is no glossary, and descriptions of machinery assume that the reader recognizes the business end of a bevel gear. Despite this insider feel, the articles centre on the human side of the fishery and all readers could easily come away spellbound by stories such as Maxine Matilpi's account (as told by Vickie Jensen) of being trapped underwater for two and a half hours in a capsized seiner.

While there is no profound analysis of the fishing industry, readers can gain a perspective on the day-to-day, season-to-season concerns of fishers and a sense of what it is like living as pawns of nature and the minister of fisheries.

Researchers a generation from now could use this as an instructive text for social history and as a data source for trade jargon, technology, and local names for landmarks and fishing territories. It is also a good source of information about some of the low profile fisheries (like jigging and trolling), thus balancing the media's emphasis on the salmon industry. Helpful maps at the beginning of most articles pinpoint the story's setting, and a generous selection of black-and-white photos, many from family scrapbooks, add a personal element to these accounts of life and labour on BC's coast.

If *Working the Tides* has the feel of a home video at a family reunion, then *The Fraser River*, by Alan Haig-Brown, could be likened to a Hollywood extravaganza. A beautifully produced book, most readers will probably first be drawn to its visual element. Rick Blacklaws' photographs of the Fraser River, from its headwaters to its delta, are stunning. The book's designer has taken full advantage of his material, creating a visual effect that, with the captions, appears to tell the story by itself. It would be a shame to consider the text as a secondary element, however, as

Haig-Brown, assuming the role of advocate, has melded history, anthropology, archaeology, geology, geography, fish biology, and modern-day travel writing into a passionate argument for attentive stewardship of one of the continent's great rivers.

Full of anthropomorphic language, the book would have readers revere the river as a living entity. Haig-Brown suggests requiring every young person in British Columbia to make a trip down the river before letting her or him vote in a provincial election. However, reading this book would probably be the next best thing. While some readers may find his fervour a bit over the top, the book is exceptionally well written and engaging — a worthy recipient of the Roderick Haig-Brown Regional Prize it took home from the 1997 BC Book Prizes.

Although seeing the Gulf of Georgia National Historic Site identified in the photo captions as the Britannia Heritage Shipyards complex was a disappointment, there is little else to mar the pleasure of poring over this book. In addition to learning a great deal about the Fraser River and how it has shaped BC's land and peoples, the reader can enjoy a fine example of environmental advocacy writing.

How "Natives" Think: About Captain Cook, For Example Marshall Sahlins

Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995. 318 pp. US\$14.95

By KEITH THOR CARLSON, *University of British Columbia*

FIVE YEARS AGO Marshall Sahlins's reputation as one of the most respected and influential figures in ethnohistory seemed secure. However, the professional accolades given Gananath Obeyesekere's

revisionist study *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook: European Mythmaking in the Pacific* threatened to destroy Sahlins's professional reputation. In *The Apotheosis*, Obeyesekere went beyond challenging Sahlins's inter-

pretations and methodologies to accusing the old sage of perpetuating an ethnocentric, self-serving, historical untruth (that late eighteenth-century Hawaiians considered Captain James Cook to be their god Lono). In leveling this charge, Obeyesekere expressed his conviction that only Natives can write Native history — that Sahlins is ideologically/racially incapable of understanding how Aboriginal people think. *How "Natives" Think: About Captain Cook, For Example* is Sahlins's no-holds-barred work of revenge and refutation.

Sahlins argues that Obeyesekere's writing is "an example of how one makes a pidgin anthropology — which is at the same time a pseudo-history — by substituting a folkloric sense of 'native' beliefs for the relevant Hawaiian ethnography." He shows that Obeyesekere's greatest flaw stems from his assumption that as a Native Sri Lankan he is somehow endowed with insights into the way other Natives think — insights Sahlins and other Europeans allegedly cannot hope to achieve. Sahlins finds this concept of exclusive shared world views among all "native" people not only offensive but, given that Obeyesekere creates the impression that eighteenth-century Hawaiians interpreted the world with a Western "bourgeois sense of practical rationality," ironic. For Sahlins, such an obviously presentist agenda illustrates Obeyesekere's propensity for reinterpreting the past in order to serve perceived contemporary needs. That other scholars failed to raise objections to Obeyesekere's views is indicative of the sorry state of critical thought and peer review, and the excesses of what some have defined as the age of apology. Sahlins demonstrates that, contrary to Obeyesekere's assertions, Western

scholars have not "slavishly repeated the irrational beliefs of their ancestors" (e.g., Cook as god). Rather, Obeyesekere's "anthropology has more in common with Cook's voyage than his uncompromising criticism of it suggests."

Sahlins believes that an understanding of the "other" is achievable, but, contrary to Obeyesekere's "commonsense suppositions," it is not ascribed. For, as Sahlins makes clear, the shared experience of having been "discovered" by Europeans is an insufficient basis for claiming a universally shared Native world view. To truly understand how Natives think one must first become intimately familiar with their local ethnographic and historical context. Objectivity is culturally biased, and careful ethnography is crucial to appreciating other cultures. In the wake of Sahlins's considered and logically tight argument Obeyesekere's appropriation of eighteenth-century Hawaiian voice crumbles like a house of cards.

Sahlins exposes not only Obeyesekere's sloppy ethnography, but also his twisted method of assessing the legitimacy of historical sources: Obeyesekere assumes that "the absence of a European mention that Cook = [the god] Lono means that for Hawaiians Cook was not Lono ... while the presence of a Hawaiian mention that Cook = Lono is an indication of the European myth to that effect. In other words, the European non-assertion is evidence of Hawaiian realities, while the Hawaiian assertion is evidence of European beliefs." Sahlins does not stop here, however. In meticulous detail, he documents how Obeyesekere's discussions of archival documents is reproachably selective at best, and blatantly deceptive at worst. Many of

Cook's European contemporaries did, in fact, report that the Hawaiians regarded Cook as their god Lono.

In writing *How "Natives" Think*, rather than *How Hawaiians Thought*, Sahlins broadens not only the appeal of his book, but the scope of his critique. Northwest Coast historians tend to regard their field as a sub-discipline of Canadian or American historiography — that is, we look east for our intellectual identity. Yet, the history of early contact here was as much, if not more, a part of a broader Pacific experience than it was an extension of historical processes stemming from the St. Lawrence Seaway or the Great Plains. If for no other reason than the temporal parallels linking contact on this coast with other parts of Pacific Oceania, we would be well advised to pay greater attention to the academic discussions emanating from our west. For while the particulars and even the subject matter of a controversy over Cook's Hawaiian apotheosis may have little

in common with current Northwest Coast ethnohistorical debate, the issues addressed in the Sahlins-Obeyesekere exchange are central to ethnohistory. As ethnohistorians we must be cautious and reflective in our application of interpretive models, and we must be honest with regard to our archival and oral sources. We must not allow modern sensibilities and/or perceived contemporary political objectives to taint our research. In light of this publication, and despite the fact that Sahlins's depiction of eighteenth-century Hawaiians might not coincide with modern Western understandings of "practical rationality" (and might, therefore, be politically unpopular in the short term), Sahlins's place in history as a leading twentieth-century thinker and scholar appears secure. So too, one hopes, are the exhaustive ethnohistorical research techniques, the cautious yet honest methodologies, and the critical processes of peer review Sahlins propounds.

*Shingwauk's Vision:
A History of Native Residential Schools*

J.R. Miller

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996. xii, 582 pp.
Illus., maps. \$29.95 paper.

By CELIA HAIG-BROWN, *York University*

THE *GLOBE AND MAIL*'s cover story on the Minister of Indian Affairs' response to the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (23 November 1996) reaffirms James Miller's assessment of residential schools across Canada and their persisting intent. The Minister says: "There has to be an understanding that they [Aboriginal

people] won't disappear unless their issues are addressed." The Minister, and by implication too many Canadian people, remain caught in "liberal assimilationist ideology" — expecting Aboriginal people to disappear. Miller concludes his study with the recognition that such ideology is impeding any progress in bringing to reality Aboriginal people's vision(s) "of

healthy and effective education for their children and the development of their communities." It is satisfying to see a historian using his work to make such a strong political statement, with implications for current policy and practices.

Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools is a useful book, a timely and comprehensive look at a variety of schools across Canada. It is one Euro-Canadian man's attempt to "make sense" of a horror of Canadian history — one in which, he argues convincingly, all Euro-Canadians are complicit. Beginning in 1620 in New France, with the Recollets taking a number of generic "Indian" boys into "the seminary," Miller guides the reader through the earliest sporadic efforts to create Christians of the savages and into the golden age of the residential schools — from the late 1800s to the 1960s. He appears to have two major goals: (1) to show that the people in the schools — students, teachers, and administrators — participated in much the same activity across the country and (2) to shift the focus of blame from the churches to the government and, ultimately, to all Euro-Canadian people. These items undergird the selection, ordering, and presentation of this study.

As Miller himself comments, his is not a new analysis but builds upon earlier works, many of which concentrate on specific schools. Its strength (and perhaps its weakness) lies in its sheer size and its effort to generalize about the schools, the staff, and the children and parents from many First Nations across the country. Miller has taken his usual painstaking care with extensive notes from a range of sources based in archival work, other people's interviews, and some new interviews with

former staff and students. There are maps showing the locations of schools across the country and extensive photographs. He further embellishes his work with poetry and excerpts from recent news articles and short stories.

Miller builds his comprehensive explanation of the phenomenon of residential schools by using specific examples from widely varying times and contexts. While such a presentation bridges geography and cultural difference, it also homogenizes and minimizes distinctions. The simple statement that there are differences, followed by examples that draw primarily on (and ultimately emphasize) similarities, leaves one with an irreconcilable contradiction. For example, the section that deals with traditional education refers to "the educational system of the Aboriginal peoples of the northern portion of North America" (p. 35, emphasis mine). In cultures in which education was integral to and inseparable from daily life from birth to death, to write of a "system" per se is to assume an ethnocentric stance; to write of a singular system is to deny the distinctions between nations and the cultures therein. A similar tension operates throughout this book. What is a reader to make of the two paragraphs on page 174, which leap thousands of miles — from 1960s Carcross, to Saskatchewan's St. Philip's in 1955–62, to Shubenacadie in Nova Scotia in 1949–50 — to show us that teachers in the schools, with two noted exceptions (one from 1895 and one from the 1950s), were less than "well-versed in pedagogy"? What does it mean that two of the five schools each had a gifted and dedicated teacher? As an ethnographer, I am left with very real questions as I skip with the author across the country and over the decades. This

is a book about Canada: while it stops in many First Nations and in every province and territory, it is not a book about any one province or any one First Nation.

Apparently coming from a school of thought that suggests that it is possible to escape ideology when presenting the "truth," Miller strives for what he might call a balanced account of residential schools by providing examples of people who feel they benefitted both from them and from missionaries with positive motivations. The book is divided into three major sections: Establishing the Residential School, Experiencing Residential Schools, and Ending and Assessing Residential Schools. In the first section, relying primarily on archival documents, Miller presents available information somewhat unproblematically and, on occasion, does not restrain himself from making value-laden comments. In something of an apologist mode, he writes: "The good sisters understandably were struck by grooming and other matters of external appearance" (p. 50). This reader asks, "Understandably to whom?" and "How are we to know that these are 'good' sisters?" On page 69, he writes understatedly of a "noticeable tendency towards discouragement of Native ways." Later he alludes to the "oppressive lunacy" of attendance policies as part of an organized attempt "to educate and colonize a people against their will" (p.169). In Chapter 12, in the second section (and in other spots throughout the book), Miller relies on an unproblematic notion of resistance — a notion central to my own work in 1988 — and, while presenting some interesting examples of staff resistance to the schools, he does not push this dimension of resistance or even

take it up in any systematic way. It is a relief when, in the third section, he frees himself to write what he really thinks in the form of strong statements of condemnation, referring to "a special place in perdition" reserved for the sexual abusers. He writes of the responsibility of a "Eurocanadian majority" to help, facilitate, and support First Nations visions for the future instead of continuing their historical hindrance, oppression, and tyranny. While contributing significantly to the literature through his presentation of extensive detail concerning a range of schools, Miller ultimately disappoints the reader in search of an analysis that might contribute to a deeper understanding of the schools and their implications.

In some senses, this book exemplifies a postmodern angst that influences even those academics who prefer not to acknowledge the possibility of postmodernism. The nostalgic search for the master narrative continues to haunt — with good reason. How long can one live with, and, more important, work with, fragmentation? Perhaps, in an effort to combat the Belleville housemaid's knee syndrome, Miller has tried to over-ride fragmentation by presenting enough specific details for a complete picture of sorts.

In the final analysis, what makes this work particularly appealing is its cross-disciplinary flavour: making comments "as a historian and a citizen," Miller provides something of a sociological gloss. He introduces the reader to the study with the story of his attendance at a gathering of former residential school students at Ontario's Shingwauk. Similarly, he ends with a present-day assessment of the schools and an unusual epilogue, juxtaposing a book excerpt, a description based on a news article, and

an anonymous letter (which has been circulating around First Nations education for the past twenty years) purportedly written by "the mother of an Indian child." Miller's conclusions

call for Euro-Canadian accountability: his work is a valuable resource for those who seek a comprehensive overview of Canadian residential schools.

*Aboriginal and Treaty Rights in Canada:
Essays on Law, Equality, and Respect for Difference*

Michael Asch, ed.

Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997, in collaboration with the Center for Constitutional Studies, University of Alberta. 284 pp. \$65 cloth.

*Treaty Talks in British Columbia:
Negotiating a Mutually Beneficial Future*

Christopher McKee

Vancouver: UBC Press, 1996. 126 pp. Map. \$65 cloth, \$24.95 paper.

By MARLENE R. ATLEO, *University of British Columbia
and Ahousaht First Nation, Nuu-chah-nulth*

FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE of British Columbia talk about negotiating their way into Canada/British Columbia. How can First Nations people say this when they have been living "in" Canada/British Columbia since these legal entities were formed? It is precisely because the institutions and sociopolitical memory of First Nations peoples pre-date these legal entities that they challenge the "facts" of their relationships with the federal and provincial governments. For First Nations peoples treaties are living documents rather than unilateral, immutable historical positions. First Nations leadership is honour bound to safeguard the common good of their people — past, present, and future — in a manner consistent with the norms and values of First Nations through the principles and terms of treaty agreements. In a postcolonial world, Canada needs

to undergo internal de-colonization in order to match its mythological international stature as a champion of democracy and equality. The nation state of Canada, evolved from British colonial administrations, legitimizes the rights of non-Aboriginal Canadians. To dissect the nation state and scrutinize its nascence may seem dangerous to the average person, yet such scrutiny is necessary — particularly in the light of the unravelling of nation states that have not come to terms with their own colonial histories.

Revisiting the historical treaty process and proceeding with a modern treaty process may be seen as one aspect of Canada's coming to terms with its colonial history. The two books reviewed here focus directly on the implications of understanding First Nations as subjects of their own history rather than merely as objects of the history of colonial governments

and, through treaty negotiations, on government engagement with First Nations as agents of their own socio-historical process.

The first book, edited by Michael Asch, provides a plethora of challenges, from a historical and international perspective, to the legitimacy of the Canadian vis-à-vis Aboriginal rights and title. The second book, by Christopher McKee, analyzes conflicting points of regarding the negotiations of modern treaties in British Columbia. These two volumes provoke counter-intuitive thinking that can be disturbing because it challenges the common-sense assumptions upon which Canadians depend for their civic and social identities. The Asch collection of essays provides a legal and constitutional background for McKee's treatment of treaty negotiations in British Columbia.

In the beginning there was the legacy of British colonial law. And then in 1973 the Supreme Court of Canada found against a hereditary Nisga'a chief in *Calder*. In the *Calder* decision the court ruled that the Canadian state was required to formally recognize that, prior to the arrival of Europeans, Aboriginal peoples had their own societies complete with institutions, types of land tenure, and governments that may well have remained functioning despite the evolution of the state of Canada. The court asserted this position "notwithstanding" precedents arising from British colonial law or the understanding of the colonists, immigrants, settlers, and their descendants. Constitutional experts such as Mel Smith maintain that, since the courts found against *Calder*, the case was lost and, therefore, Aboriginal title does not exist. Where such a narrow, technical view of the law ends

is precisely the point at which Asch begins. Asch presents the multi-dimensional nature of the law by exploring the social/political/anthropological/scientific/historical implications of Justice Hall's decision in *Calder*. The law is about the application and enforcement of dominant norms and values, but it is in the substance of an actual decision, in the space between the letters of the law, that the principles of law emerge. It is in this space of interpretation and emergence that Asch sets the collection of essays that bring the law, equality, and respect for difference together in three broad areas: (1) actualizing Justice Hall's recommendations in *Calder*, (2) clarifying particular aspects of contested conceptual issues, and (3) realigning political relationships based on equality and respect within a socio-historical frame of reference.

The first three essays promote principles by which we may articulate the ideals recommended by Justice Hall in the *Calder* case. Chamberlin challenges the mainstream reading of the treaty process, maintaining that this process must be historically contextualized before it will be possible to continue it in a mutually respectful fashion. Bell and Asch argue that historical treaties can only be understood by turning away from ethnocentric historical precedents and interpreting historical facts in the light of contemporary social science and law. LaRocque cautions against (re)inventing traditions rather than choosing to develop a justice system that eschews ethnocentrism and promotes cultural equality.

The second three essays investigate particular aspects of legal issues and treaty rights in the light of Justice Hall's recommendations. Macklem

maintains that a close reading of court decisions reveals that Aboriginal views must be incorporated into treaty analyses because treaties were entered into in order to protect traditional life from further incursion by governments and third parties. McNeil argues that the true value of Aboriginal title is reduced in the legal context when it is not applied according to common law principles to provide Aboriginal peoples the support needed to meet their contemporary needs. Borrows provides compelling evidence that the Royal Proclamation of 1763 should be viewed through the lens of the Treaty of Niagara of 1764 — which promoted peace, friendship, mutual non-interference, and respect — as evidence of the British Crown's commitment to ensure that Aboriginal rights would not be undermined by colonial power.

The third section consists of two essays that explore the implications of a new relationship between Aboriginal people and the Canadian state based on principles of equality and respect for difference. A multidimensional Indigenous perspective is provided by Venne, who, with regard to Treaty 6, demonstrates that treaty-making can only be understood in the context of oral history, collective memory, cultural values, and the legacies of living reciprocities. Asch and Zlotkin pick up the theme of living reciprocities and structure it within a new constitutional arrangement that provides legitimacy for the post-modern, postcolonial nation state of Canada, with Aboriginal title as its constitutional bedrock. Asch, the anthropologist, and Zlotkin, the professor of law, provide a vision of a Canadian constitution that could withstand contemporary challenges to

the legal institutions of the nation state both from without and from within.

The space that Asch holds up as a place for the emergence of Aboriginal life seems to be defined and managed by non-Aboriginal experts. Equality of cultural status is only possible if the means exists to articulate it: in the case of First Nations, such means do not exist. The culturally different "other" who lacks resources, the development of whose justice system is tied to government funding requirements that demand a historical justification for self-management, cannot choose, as LaRocque suggests, to ignore the ways in which their traditions have been stereotyped in the eyes of the Western legal system. Law, as an artefact of history, needs to be more closely examined for its lack of cultural equality.

For non-Aboriginal Canadians born in Canada the very concept of negotiating one's way into a country is conceptually challenging. These people take the socio-historical conditions of their citizenship for granted. Dominant norms and values, upheld by the rule of law, are the context into which non-Aboriginal Canadians are socialized. In British Columbia, many First Nations are currently negotiating their way into Canada. Christopher McKee, a political scientist at the University of British Columbia, analyzes treaty negotiations in British Columbia. This book is funded in part by a grant from the Treaty Commission of British Columbia, whose role in educating the public is partially fulfilled by it.

This book is the first to open up treaty-making in British Columbia. McKee does a credible job of pro-

viding information concerning the treaty-making process without trying to convince the reader of the correctness of any one approach. He tackles his subject in a straightforward manner, beginning with background and issues to be negotiated, and then going on to consider the process of treaty-making itself, speculate on its future, and to provide conclusions in a positive, albeit cautious, tone. The issues to be negotiated are represented by specific examples (e.g., with regard to the Sechelt and the Nuu'chah'nulth) of some of the main issues: forms of self-government, acknowledgment of alienated lands and resources, economic development initiatives, and greater role for Aboriginal participation in natural resource management. In his discussion of the treaty-making process McKee deals with such problems as secrecy, third-party representation, costs, and government protection of public interest as well as Mel Smith's position that there should be a 5 per cent limit on negotiated land and a blanket extinguishment of Aboriginal rights. He enables both Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals to have confidence that the process can produce treaties that are legitimate. McKee raises questions concerning how to address issues that emerge from the treaty process and the new institutions created by it: who will evaluate treaty outcomes? will the benefits be equally distributed within the Aboriginal community? how will the political climate help or hinder the process? will Aboriginal frustrations with the treaty process and outcomes be reduced enough to ward off protests? The conclusion provides a nice summary and could stand by itself. It is accessible enough for a

layperson to read while referring back to specific chapters for more detail. Most useful are the appendices, consisting of the 1991 recommendations of the British Columbia Task Force, a listing of First Nations organizations participating in treaty negotiations as of April 1996, and a chronology of events that have contributed to creating and pacing the treaty-making process in British Columbia.

McKee does not provide a framework that renders his evidence compelling in the face of constitutional experts who maintain that Aboriginal title does not exist. As he merely cites the "heavyweight" authors who write in support of First Nations treaty issues rather than the facts behind their positions, McKee cannot adequately challenge the assumptions that underpin legal judgments and common-sense knowledge.

Asch's and McKee's books provide timely and important discussions about historical treaties and modern treaty-making. The need to understand economic relationships in the context of legal contracts that are (re)-negotiated from time to time is a fact of capitalist society. Understanding social relations as contracts rather than as institutional structures is a relatively new phenomenon. Asch and McKee provide insight into why and how this is happening with respect to the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the federal and provincial governments of Canada. These two books are recommended reading in an era in which legal relationships between Indigenous peoples and states are de/reconstructing at a rapid pace, both internationally and next door.

*High Slack: Waddington's Gold Road and the Bute Inlet
Massacre of 1864*
Judith Williams

Vancouver: New Star, 1996. 119 pp. Illus., map. \$16 paper.

By KEN G. BREALEY, *University of British Columbia*

THE ONLY SUSTAINED military resistance to colonial authority west of the Rocky Mountains and north of the forty-ninth parallel, the so-called Chilcotin War of 1864, remains as palpable a memory for the Tsilhqot'in people as it is an almost incidental sidebar in the annals of most BC historical writing. This short, but engaging and attractive, book is a follow-up to the "High Slack" exhibition and symposium, *The Tsilhqot'in War of 1864 and the 1993 Cariboo-Chilcotin Justice Inquiry*, held at the University of British Columbia in November 1994, and is an attempt to, as the author phrases it, "peel back the many layers of truth" that surrounded, and are still being contextualized by this significant, if somewhat shadowy, event.

Beginning with her own 1991 explorations of Toba and Bute Inlets, Judith Williams juxtaposes her impressions of the landscape with those recorded by Robert Homfray, who, in 1861 on behalf of the Hudson's Bay Company, first probed Bute Inlet as a possible brigade route to the Cariboo goldfields. Fast forwarding back to 1991, and supported, in large part, through interviews with elders of the Klahoose Band, she then attempts to encapsulate something of the otherwise undocumented Kwakwaka'wakw version of Homfray's journey before returning once again to a rather more nuanced recollection of her own retracing of Alfred Waddington's ill-fated pack road up the Homathko River canyon.

This takes Williams, both literally and figuratively, into the entangled events and places that constituted the Chilcotin War itself. Ordering the encounter into a series of spatial vignettes, Williams creates a kind of geographical *mise en scène* that evokes something of the performative drama that, in a certain sense, the conflict actually was. She concludes with an account of the surrender, trial, and execution of the five Tsilhqot'in chiefs, and although most of this is excavated from Matthew Begbie's trial notes and other colonial correspondence, the voices of the Tsilhqot'in still come through. It is only fitting, then, that the author punctuates the narrative by recalling some of the eloquent, and curative, testimonials on the war delivered by contemporary Tsilhqot'in chiefs and elders at the symposium that inspired the book.

Williams writes sensitively and with a minimum of academic jargon, and, while I was puzzled with the choice of certain archival photographs that, on the face of it, have nothing to do with the subject matter of the book, she has about the right touch of graphic support. By tacking back and forth between the Euro-Canadian and Tsilhqot'in worlds, and between past and present, the author successfully reveals some of the anxieties of the colonial project in British Columbia without losing sight of the fact that the war, far from being a mere anecdote on the colonial stage, was the "thin edge of the wedge" of the latent

violence that has always simmered just underneath the surface of the colonial enterprise more generally. I still cringe, however, at the use of the term "massacre" (especially in the title) to refer to Lha tse'sin's offensive against Brewster's road crew, and I thought that the map of the events of the war, which seems to be (whether accidentally or deliberately is not clear) a translation of Waddington's original 1864 *Sketch Map of the Chilcotin War*, would have benefitted from a little more attention to Tsilhqot'in geography, some of which has already been mapped out by the Tsilhqot'in people. That said, the

author does properly acknowledge that the asymmetries in emphasis that still permeate this contrapuntal story must be left for the Tsilhqot'in to redress themselves. Until that time, this book will stand nicely in its own right as a welcome complement to Terry Glavin's *Nemiah: The Unconquered Country* and, perhaps most important, as a desperately needed antidote to (and replacement of) Mel Rothenburger's one-sided, and ultimately racist, polemic *The Chilcotin War*, which, as the Tsilhqot'in have noted, still stocks far too many public school bookshelves throughout the BC Interior. I recommend *High Slack*.

Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History

Jennifer S.H. Brown and Elizabeth Vibert, eds.

Peterborough: Broadview, 1996. 519 pp. Illus. \$29.95 paper.

By ROBIN RIDINGTON, *University of British Columbia*

READING BEYOND WORDS is a rich collection of twenty-one essays that explore how First Nations experience has been represented as well as misplaced in the texts that make up the substance of conventional history and ethnography. What unites the essays, Brown and Vibert explain in their introduction, "is that texts are not transparent." The facts they present "are socially constructed, moulded by the social and cultural forces in place when the texts were created, and by the later contexts in which they have been reread and reinterpreted" (pp. x-xi). A realistic understanding of texts about First Nations history thus requires an act of authorship on the part of the reader — a reading beyond the words themselves. While acknowledging a debt to postmodern discourse analysis,

these essays tend to business rather than to the arcana of postmodern literary theory. They and the reader are better off for it.

Following genre conventions similar to those of First Nations discourse, each of these essays tells a story. Together, the stories bring into focus a coherent whole that reflects a world of experience beyond the words captured in print. I found the book hard to put down once I had begun reading it, but I also took the liberty of initially sampling essays from each of the seven headings rather than reading it from cover to cover. Frieda Esay Klippenstein's reading of written and oral accounts documenting an encounter between James Douglas and Carrier Chief Kwah reads almost like a mystery story. Frederic W. Gleach makes a convincing case for

"controlled speculation" to unravel the story of what the encounter between Captain John Smith and Pocahontas may have meant in the language of Pohatan ceremony. Bunny McBride reflects on her experience writing the biography of Penobscot dancer and entertainer Molly Spotted Elk. Daniel Clayton takes a close look at multiple versions of Cook's encounter with the Nuu-Chah-Nulth at Nootka Sound. Erica Smith describes an 1863 trial that turns on the linguistic contrast between woman as prostitute and woman as "the angel in the house" (p. 372).

The essays in this collection are rich because of their vivid content and they are stimulating because of the creative and intelligent ways the authors have gone about discovering how documents and multiple narrative voices combine to create stories. Maureen Matthews and Roger Roulette review Hallowell's account of the dream dance led by Ojibwe elder Naamiwan (Fair Wind) in relation to accounts by contemporary Ojibwe people in their own language. Their story is satisfying as history, as philosophy, and as literature. Winona Stevenson describes her very personal quest for reconciling oral tradition and written documents relevant to the life of her great-great grandfather, Askenootow (Charles Pratt). Through her and him we have a window into how Native people subject to the pressures of colonization were able to maintain heteroglossic identities.

The joy of this book is that it is beautifully written. This is particularly wonderful in a collection by so many

different authors. While the ethnographic and historical particulars range widely in time and place, the stories work well together because of a devotion to text and context shared by all the authors. Taken together, the essays make a kind of implicit meta-theoretical statement to the effect that any theoretical insight into how to interpret the past must arise from a close and critical reading of all available texts in relation to whatever else can be learned about how and when they were produced. As Brown and Vibert conclude their introduction:

We hope that these writings will build some new frameworks for doing Native history, and perhaps undermine a few older ones. In reading the essays ourselves, we were repeatedly reminded that we all share not only some common understandings and premises, but also some major concerns about how best to steer a course among the cross-currents, rocks, and whirlpools that beset travellers on this rapidly flowing river. (p. xxvii)

This book is an unusually good read and should become known to readers beyond the disciplines of ethnohistory and anthropology. I have mentioned only a few of the stories it tells; the others are equally interesting and engaging. The book should be required reading for courses dealing with First Nations history, culture, literature, and philosophy and belongs in the library of anyone interested in a wider reading of First Nations history.