

provide careful analyses of the secondary literature relating to debates surrounding indigenous contributions to the Pleistocene extinctions, the environmental causes of the disappearance of the Hohokam, the demographic collapse brought about by the arrival of Old World diseases, Native use of fire, and Native participation in the near extermination of the bison, white-tailed deer, and beaver. In the end, readers preoccupied with the idea of the ecological Indian are led to understand that, although indigenous peoples have indeed long had unique, close, and respectful relationships with their environments, these relationships did not conform to nineteenth- and twentieth-century notions of conservation or environmentalism. While some experts in the field will find nothing new in this argument, they can rest assured that they will benefit from Krech's careful analysis as well as from his copious and detailed citations. Had the publisher decided to include a bibliography, the book would have been even more effective in

meeting the authors' goals.

It is unfortunate that readers encounter an epilogue rather than a conclusion at the end of this book. The epilogue discusses, superficially, more case studies than Krech attempted to deal with in the entire body of the book. It is difficult to believe that his rapid-fire discussions of recent hotly contested issues, such as the Makah whale hunt, do justice to them. A conclusion that explored the implications of his arguments more fully would reinforce, rather than obscure, the contributions his book has to make. Nevertheless, *The Ecological Indian* should do much to familiarize scholars and the public with the important literature published on the history of Native-environmental relations in the last twenty years, to stimulate further research, and to improve our ability to make important decisions for the future. Given how many of these decisions British Columbians will be called upon to make in the next decades, they, in particular, should welcome this new book.

*At a Crossroads: Archaeology and  
First Peoples in Canada*

George P. Nicholas and Thomas D. Andrews, Editors

Burnaby: Archaeology Press, Simon Fraser University, 1997.  
303 pp. Illus. \$37.00 paper.

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**A**RCHAEOLOGISTS WORLDWIDE working within postcolonial contexts have increasingly come under pressure to adopt an explicitly political position – pressure

they must balance against the pitfalls of feigning scientific neutrality. Conversely, as indigenous peoples have found, archaeology can be both an insidious foe and a powerful ally in the

fight for restorative justice. This recent book is a most welcome Canadian addition to the growing world literature on the conjunctions between different ways of knowing the past.

The book is organized into three sections: "Working Together," Traditional Knowledge and Archaeology," and "Curation, Presentation, and Ownership of the Past." The editors contribute excellent introductory and concluding chapters. Bruce Trigger, Canada's foremost archaeologist and a pioneer in examining the social context of archaeology, writes an impressive foreword to the book. As this book has some twenty-two chapters, it is clearly beyond the scope of this review to discuss all the points of view represented in it. The editors' efforts to present a plurality of voices is, however, much appreciated: of the twenty-six contributors, eight are identified as belonging to First Nations, six are academics (including two students), five are with governments, six are consultants, and nine have other institutional (mainly museum/cultural) affiliations (some authors fall into more than one category). Half the authors are women. Subjects covered range from ownership and legal issues surrounding a Coast Salish stone bowl to Native internships in Manitoba, from joint university-First Nations field schools to the place of archaeology in the Sechelt self-government act. The book is weighted towards Arctic and Subarctic case studies, perhaps because the high Aboriginal population density and relative lack of destructive development has reduced the frictions and allowed positive agendas to take the lead. Nonetheless, Canadian archaeology has seldom been revealed to have such a diverse set of socially relevant applications and such a broad base of knowledgeable stakeholders.

Indeed, in their introductory essay "Indigenous Archaeology in the Post-Modern World," the editors stress that hearing many voices in a respectful forum is tantamount to acknowledging the validity of the diversity of interests in the collective cultural heritage, and the collection of case studies and reflective pieces that they have gathered is powerful testimony to that effect. One wonders, however, if the bobbing and weaving of the postmodern ethos of polyvocality can be just as bereft of outright political conviction as its more aggressively naive scientific counterparts. Trigger makes just this point in his introduction when he asserts that an overly relativistic and insufficiently positivist approach in archaeology leaves all interpretations of the past on an equal footing. All concerned are then unequipped to fight unsavoury "nationalist, colonialist and imperialist" archaeologies. This point may be understandably downplayed because of a central dilemma in contemporary archaeology: how do archaeologists juggle the moral right of peoples to have control over their own past with an equally strong desire to fight nationalistic misinterpretation of archaeological data? What is found *in* the land is, after all, powerful, enduring, yet contentious evidence for past activities *on* the land.

The resolution of the dilemma might seem simple when the topic is distant and unpleasant Balkan nationalisms, less so when it enters the realm of contemporary indigenous nationalism in Canada. Ultimately, perhaps, archaeologists must become explicitly engaged with the politics of the "past in the present" and drop at least some of their pretence of disengagement. As Hugh Brody notes in *Maps and Dreams*, in a country fuelled by development

of natural resources, it is often only years after doing their work that anthropologists will learn for whom they were really working. *At a Crossroads* provides several case studies, suitable for class discussion, of conflicts over the past and their creative resolution, and it points the way towards archaeologies of the future within a multi-cultural state.

In this regard, it is welcome that several authors try to integrate their contributions with contemporary archaeological theory, though the hollow centre of this book is surely the schism between the archaeologists' traditional focus on material and more holistic approaches to the past. It is this difference in approach to material that may lead to problems that are only now becoming apparent and that the book is thus unable to address. For example, why is concern about the destruction of the archaeological record so intermittent and patchy? In British Columbia, despite long-standing laws, to my knowledge there have been only two prosecutions for the destruction of archaeological sites. Why? The government may have little interest in slowing development, the developers little desire to trim their profits, the police little experience in this area of law, the consulting archaeologists little motivation to annoy their paymasters, and academic archaeologists little inclination to see beyond their ivory tower. Yet First Nations?

Why are they apparently reluctant to use the law to protect the cultural heritage to which they lay claim? While this question remains unanswered, what emerges from this book are complex examples of alternative archaeologies that bear considerable reflection by all interested in how history is made and valued.

Perhaps it is inevitable that a poly-vocal approach, when combined with apparently light editorial direction, means certain subjects will be poorly covered and others missed altogether. In particular, issues surrounding archaeological approaches to human remains and the resultant differing views over the appropriate treatment of the dead are surprisingly ill expressed. Over the years, no single topic has caused so much bad feeling between indigenous peoples and archaeologists, nor cast into such sharp relief the collision between scientific and humanistic approaches to the past. Human remains are mentioned in passing by several contributors, but there is no serious grappling with this issue. This makes the volume somewhat incomplete within a Canadian context and will doubtless be a disappointment to foreign readers. Nevertheless, even this shortcoming is a sign of the positive outlook of a fine book that stresses the pleasure rather than the pain of encounters that occur at archaeological/indigenous crossroads.