

*Brushed by Cedar, Living By the River:
Coast Salish Figures of Power*

Crisca Bierwert

Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1999. 314 pp. \$52.95 cloth.

By Jo-ann Archibald

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C RISCA BIERWERT presents ethnographic essays on various lifeways and issues faced by the Stó:lō people of southwestern British Columbia. She also includes perspectives of Native American people of Washington State who have some cultural practices similar to those of the Stó:lō Nation. Bierwert brings some complex cultural issues to life and, most important, brings out community perspectives and teachings about the Stó:lō relationship to land and resources as well as the Stó:lō spiritual, family, community, and cultural identity. She also portrays the difficult challenges of getting past colonization and appreciating contentious issues related to economics, politics, Aboriginal rights, and gaining an understanding of cultural protocols and cultural epistemologies. She weaves her personal story and, most important, her "outsider" perspective and academic analysis with the voices and experiences of Stó:lō and Coast Salish peoples. My comments will be limited to what was written about the Stó:lō communities.

I valued immensely the words spoken by Stó:lō community people such as Sweetie Malloway, Frank Malloway, Elizabeth Phillips, and Amelia Douglas, who are highly regarded by many people in the Stó:lō territory. I am Stó:lō and have grown up valuing the river that gives us our name and valuing the teachings of the elders. The

community people shared their knowledge and personal views with Crisca Bierwert. I was disappointed to not find any mention of her checking back with the people who are cited in the book and obtaining their permission to publish what they said.

I was surprised to find myself in the book. Bierwert presents a vignette of me discussing the concept of "silence," grandparent, with the Stó:lō elders during the time I worked on a locally developed Stó:lō curriculum. Coming across this episode reminded me of the stories I had heard from First Nations people who recalled having an academic outsider "live with them," interview them, and then go away. They hear nothing from this person until someone tells them that he/she has published a book about them. In my case, I didn't know Crisca Bierwert was conducting research for her book or that her book existed until I was asked to review it. I knew that she had worked on the curriculum project, and I certainly wasn't asked if she could use my personal identity in retelling the curriculum session with the elders. Even though Bierwert presented the vignette in a respectful and fairly accurate manner, she did not ask me if I wanted to be named. This short episode is only a minute part of the book, but it is an example of an important issue — one that ensures that academic research and publishing will continue to be mistrusted by First Nations people.

I felt very uncomfortable reading about spiritual practices that we are asked not to publicly discuss or write about. I believe that we are asked to do so in order to protect this type of knowledge, to keep it sacred and personal, to let it live among the people who practise it. Bierwert presents the issues and problems of introducing "writing" into spiritual practices, yet she introduces it anyway. Non-Native academics need to respect spiritual privacy and knowledge and to stop writing about it.

This book presents Stó:lō people as fraught with family violence, as suffering exceptionally low unemployment,

and as wrestling with never-ending fishing issues. One short paragraph lists the types of initiatives undertaken by the Stó:lō to counter these problems. Even though Bierwert introduces the historical and socio-political landscape in order to understand the context of these problems, she leaves too many gaps. Yes, there are problems, but much is being done to create a better Stó:lō life.

The book jacket describes Bierwert's narrative ethnography as representing "the future of contemporary anthropology." If it does, then I am disappointed.

First Fish, First People:

Salmon Tales of the North Pacific Rim

Judith Roche and Meg McHutchison, editors

Vancouver: One Reel and UBC Press, 1998. 199 pp. Illus. \$29.95 paper.

River of the Angry Moon: Seasons on the Bella Coola

Mark Hume with Harvey Thommasen

Vancouver: Greystone, 1998. 184 pp. Map. \$26.95 cloth.

By Charles Dawson

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EVERY NOW AND THEN, one comes across a pair of books that dialogue with each other in ways that extend the reader's sense of local place, while siting that place in a network of global concerns. Each of the books reviewed does so superbly in its own right. Taken together, they offer a remarkable sense of the overlap of ecology, story, and history that have come to constitute British Columbia.

Dealing, as they do, with rivers and with salmon, the books speak in powerful ways of the human demands that have crested through this century and imploded into a network of absence. But rather than leave the reader with a sense of nostalgia or sadness alone, the books point to the diversity that remains, the watersheds of cultural and ecological memory left to pass on to the future. Concern for