

*You Are Asked to Witness:
The Stó:lō in Canada's Pacific Coast History*

Keith Thor Carlson, editor

Chilliwack: Sto:lo Heritage Trust, 1997. 208 pp. Illus., maps. \$26.95 paper

By IYESELWET te Cheam (E. Denise Douglas)
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KEITH CARLSON has gathered works of both professionals and of the Stó:lō to compile what will likely be perceived by many readers to be *the* written text of Stó:lō history – a creation of the Stó:lō people themselves. Carlson uses the original language of the Stó:lō (Halq'emeylem) as much as possible and presents a commendable account of historical events. He forfeits his voice to that of the Stó:lō people in various places.

The work recounts “Canada’s Pacific Coast History,” focusing on the Stó:lō, whose traditional territory extends the entire periphery of the Fraser River, north to Spuzzum, across the breadth of southern Vancouver Island, and into the United States as far south as Bellingham, Washington. Since the book’s perspective is on Canadian history, the living Stó:lō relationship with people in the United States is almost lost. Unfortunately, Carlson also all but missed Stó:lō women’s issues and the devastation caused by the Indian Act, which was not redressed in such legislation as Bill C-31, intended to permit Indigenous women so deprived to regain status.

This is an interpretive work, an outsider’s look into the Stó:lō (the People of the River) world. The book does not address the effects of factionalism on the construction of a documented history, which could have political implications for the Stó:lō in the

future. Political motives underpin some of the contents, which may be offensive to those Stó:lō people who are not represented. This is evident in the choice of Stó:lō contributors as well as in the contemporary photographs, which, by their presentation, seem to etch the spotlighted politicians into history, draping them with an already archival look. The two contributors of Stó:lō origin seem to present insider accounts. However, their work is interpretive as well. In the Introduction (2-26), Siyemchess does not speak to the part of Stó:lō history that he knows, and he admits this throughout the edited interview. Unfortunately, the researchers and their subject have differing objectives. The researchers were interested in fishing issues, yet they interviewed an informant who did not fish. This informant was aware of the practices of slavery and the salt trade, yet these were evidently not his own family stories. His family was knowledgeable about the farming industry during the turn of the century, and he could probably have better contributed to this gap in Canadian history. Albert “Sonny” McHalsie starts his contribution by echoing what he learned from anthropological and archeological works. For many years he has interviewed elders, but his work remains interpretive.

In Chapter 4, Carlson makes a common statement, which is not validated. He is not alone in this mistake.

He asserts that “the Xwelitem arrived in Stó:lō territory and started taking possession of Stó:lō and resources” (54). Such an assertion could have implications for land claims. The Xwelitem in fact started excluding each other, but there is no documentation in Stó:lō (or any other) records of Stó:lō land and resources being ceded. The Stó:lō people, from historical times to the present, resist the appropriation of their land and resources, to which they still assert title, as is evident in Carlson’s own documentation (as well as in the recent news). The centrepiece photograph (75-6) provides a graphic example of recognition of title and rights from the Indigenous perspective.

Overall, I commend Carlson for his presentation, especially his chronicle of smallpox and his presentation of Cheam’s history. He has compiled his work meticulously and thoroughly, although he still measures Stó:lō history as a response to colonialism, thus echoing European values. He cites Stó:lō history as though it were relevant only to the past and speaks of Stó:lō people as though they were objects of the past. Perhaps, with the continued participation of the Stó:lō Nation, he will be able to assist in defining the Stó:lō people as a living part of – as participating subjects in – Canada’s future history and to view Canada as part of Stó:lō history.

*“Boston Men” on the Northwest Coast:
The American Maritime Fur Trade, 1788-1844*

Mary Malloy

Kingston, Ontario, and Fairbanks, Alaska: Limestone, 1998.
232 pp. US\$28 cloth.

By Jim Delgado

Vancouver Maritime Museum

THE MARITIME FUR TRADE of the Northwest Coast has been the subject of a number of works in both the United States and Canada over the last century. Recent studies include James R. Gibson’s *Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods* (1992), Richard Somerset Mackie’s *Trading Beyond the Mountains: The British Fur Trade on the Pacific, 1793-1843* (1997), and *Fur Traders from New England: The Boston Men in the North Pacific, 1787-1800* (1997), edited by Briton C. Busch and Barry M. Gough, which presents one of the first

histories of the trade, written by mariner William Dane Phelps just a few decades after the events he recorded.

Mary Malloy’s *“Boston Men”* is a focused, detailed study that examines the nature of American involvement in the trade. It builds on a number of earlier works, integrating new scholarship, a detailed examination of a number of original ship’s logs and journals, and an anthropological perspective on the nature of American shipboard society, Native societies, and their interactions. The maritime fur trade was characterized as dangerous