

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