

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