

Book Reviews

Alberni Prehistory: Archaeological and Ethnographic Investigations on Western Vancouver Island, by Alan D. McMillan and Denis St. Claire. Theytus Books and the Alberni Valley Museum, 1982. Pp. 219.

This attractively presented volume is primarily an archaeological site report detailing the results of two seasons of excavation at Shoemaker Bay and a further season of regional archaeological survey in Alberni Inlet.

Acknowledgement and introductory sections should remind the reader of the unique nature of archaeological research and publication. Rarely does a full-scale report such as this become available in fewer than ten years after the initiation of field work. Typically, by the time such a volume is published the work has involved co-operation and funding from several institutions and the co-ordination of the activities of dozens of assistants including field workers, draftsmen, artists, photographers and specialists in the analysis of various materials.

The first chapter deals with the natural environment of the study area. It is followed by chapters on regional ethnography and history. Drawing together information from the published ethnographic literature and interviews with their own native informants, the authors relate a complex picture of native life. In the last century many groups appear to have experienced shifting territorial boundaries. Skirmishes, if not actual wars, often seem to have been motivated by a desire to obtain territory. In a few cases the same locality changed hands several times. These descriptions are enriched by a seeming cacaphony of native names whose pronunciation and consistency of spelling are assisted by the volume's first appendix, prepared by Randy Bouchard.

Next is a chapter on the archaeological inventory covering sites in the Alberni Valley, Alberni Inlet and Barkley Sound. The results are presented in a clear and direct manner. Unfortunately there is no attempt to explain site patterning. This points up a dilemma in archaeology. When

archaeologists attempt to understand the rationale of site distributions, a principal theme has been the correlation of site locations with the distribution of resources or resource complexes. Where richly detailed native traditions, especially origin myths for specific settlements, are preserved they rarely mesh with "scientifically" derived explanations based upon local resource-settlement correlations. It is this reviewer's opinion that historical particularistic explanations such as those from the ethnographic record are most valid for understanding site distributions *within* an area the size of that encompassed by this site inventory. But when considering much larger areas such as the entire British Columbia coast, ethnographically derived explanations are less useful and correlations of settlement data with major variations in the distribution of resource complexes may be the most productive approach.

The next chapter analyzes the archaeological remains from the Shoemaker Bay site, a large shell midden. The authors observed five major stratigraphic units. There is evidence of human use of the site throughout most of the time span represented by these units. Cultural materials are grouped into two intergrading units named Shoemaker Bay I and II. The non-archaeologist may find himself confused because the cultural units are numbered from the bottom up and the stratigraphic units are designated from the top down. A Radiometric date indicates that the initial occupation of the Shoemaker Bay site was about 2000 B.C., with full-scale use of the site not starting until about a thousand years later. Abandonment is estimated to have taken place some centuries after the most recent 14^{C} date of A.D. 820.

More than 3,000 artifacts were recovered during two field seasons. These are described in a clear and well-organized manner, although the reproductions of many of the photographs of the stone artifacts are so dark as to obscure surface details. In contrast, the photographs and ink drawings of the bone specimens are of excellent quality.

An appendix by Greg Monks explores the quantitative similarities of the artifact assemblage to others on the south coast. Interestingly, the artifact complexes throughout the site's occupation suggest strongest affinities with sites in the Gulf of Georgia rather than with the closer Nootkan sites. In contrast, food remains indicate knowledge and use of west coast marine foods. Food remains are analyzed in detail in an appendix by Gay Calvert and Susan Crockford. Another appendix by Neal Crozier and James Amos describes the archaeological soil matrix.

In summary, by combining history and ethnography with a traditional archaeological site report the authors have produced a document of

interest to a wide audience. In addition to its anticipated professional audience the volume ought to be popular in local schools and libraries.

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The West: The History of a Region in Confederation, by J. F. Conway.
Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1983. Pp. 261.

John F. Conway, a sociologist at the University of Regina, has written a lively account of western discontent within the Canadian political and economic structure. His west includes British Columbia but excludes "the Yukon and the Northwest Territories." The story is "told through the most dramatic events characteristic of the West's uneasy place in Confederation," from "the Riel Rebellions of 1869 and 1885," through the rise of agrarian populism and the growing self-consciousness of the working class, the devastation caused by drought and depression in the thirties and the impact of potash and petroleum, to current confrontations emerging out of the National Energy Policy, the "patriation" of the constitution and the collapse of the boom in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

"Concession and compromise," Conway asserts, have "always stopped short of redressing the structural sources of the West's unhappiness." Western discontent arises from "a contradiction historically rooted in the very political and economic structures of Canada, as the nation was established and developed" (p. 5). Confederation was intended to create in British North America a structure that would at once be acceptable to the substantial French-speaking and Roman Catholic minorities (a majority in Canada East) and maintain a British presence in the northern part of the continent. This presence west of the Great Lakes would be reinforced by the entrepreneurial enterprise of the established colonies and by British immigration.

The "structural" difficulty arose from the principles of representation by population and the rule of the majority as applied in a federal system. Federal statesmanship had to deal not merely with three entities roughly balanced in population, but also with an increasing number of political entities in the western hinterland. A balancing act, not beyond the competence of a political juggler, became a display of the juggler's art that involved clubs that varied more in weight than in colour or shape. Finally a northern magus, convinced that Canadian survival depended less on internal manipulations than on the assumption of fuller responsibilities in