

Sound Heritage: Voices from British Columbia, edited by Saeko Usukawa and the editors of the *Sound Heritage Series*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1984. Pp. 276; illustrations. \$24.95.

For a decade, the *Sound Heritage* series stood alongside *BC Studies* and *Raincoast Chronicles* at the forefront of indigenous British Columbia scholarship. Produced under the auspices of the Sound and Moving Image Division of the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, which gathered the oral recollections upon which the publication was based, each issue of *Sound Heritage* explored a particular theme significant in the province's history. Provincial government restraint forced the publication's demise with issue number 40 in 1983, leaving us with this edition of the best of *Sound Heritage* as ample testimony to its unique contribution to retrieving the British Columbia past.

Sound Heritage: Voices from British Columbia includes over fifty vignettes interweaving the oral testimony of participants and observers. The first section centres on native culture, with a selection of legends followed by three stories illustrating the nature of Indian-missionary contact. The second and by far the largest section recreates the settlement experience from the perspective both of ethnic minorities and of members of the dominant society. The lives and aspirations of working people form the theme of the third section, while the fourth focuses on efforts to link a geographically diverse province by rail, water and then by air.

Contained within this special volume are many of the most memorable recollections from earlier issues. Mary Englund's gentle recounting of her harsh experience at an Indian mission boarding school once again disturbs our conscience by its lack of recrimination or desire for retribution. We relive the efforts of Scandinavian dreamers to build utopias in the wilderness and of equally idealistic British gentlemen to live in leisure watching Okanagan orchards grow the fruit that would assuredly remake their fortunes. The human dignity underlying the drama of Vancouver's "Bloody Sunday" in 1938 reclaims our attention, as does the spirit of adventure which drove on early bush pilots and other aviation pioneers.

Sound Heritage: Voices from British Columbia is intended for popular consumption and probably largely succeeds in its goal of making the past come alive for the casual reader. Most of the stories are inherently appealing. The text is attractively formatted and well illustrated. The almost inevitable consequence is, however, lessened utility for the serious historian. The separate vignettes lack historical context, a limitation to

some extent inevitable in a single anthology skimming across time and place. Dates and geographical locations of events described are sometimes non-existent and impossible to determine from the little information provided. The relationship between narratives, even those following directly upon each other, is often obscure. The volume also displays a major weakness commonly associated with oral history publications: lack of specificity as to the representativeness of the particular recollections chosen for inclusion. Particularly disturbing is the absence of an appendix identifying interviewees or their association with the events described — information which for the most part already exists in the original *Sound Heritage* volumes.

These comments are not to deny the significant contribution made by *Sound Heritage: Voices from British Columbia*. The province's past is brought alive with a sensitivity generally not possible in traditional narratives or synthetic analyses. Perhaps most importantly, to read through *Sound Heritage*, whether it be via this anthology or in the original, is to be usefully reminded that in the final analysis the strength of British Columbia lies in its people and in their tenacity, often despite considerable physical and personal hardships, to persevere toward the goals they have set for themselves.

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