

## BOOK REVIEWS

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*“Opposition on the Coast”:  
The Hudson’s Bay Company,  
American Coasters,  
the Russian American Company,  
and Native Traders on the  
Northwest Coast, 1825–1846*

James R. Gibson, editor

Toronto: The Champlain Society,  
2019. 295 pp. \$99.00 cloth.

HOWARD STEWART  
*Denman Island*

JIM GIBSON HAS assembled a collection of primary sources: twenty-seven documents from the Hudson’s Bay Company Archives (HBCA), the British Columbia Archives (BCA), and microfilm of Russian-American Company (RAC) records from the US National Archives. A significant part of his contribution is the translation of RAC documents from the original Russian. As Gibson points out, the material from all three sources presents exclusively the views of the white male managers who prepared the original reports, letters, journals, and memoirs. Though skewed in favour of their race, gender, and class, they are, Gibson

judges, the best available material from these kinds of sources.

I was not familiar with the work of the Champlain Society before I reviewed this book, and I was looking for more of a storyline than it aims to provide in its publications. Its goal is to advance knowledge of Canadian history by publishing primary records of historical value, such of those presented in Gibson’s *“Opposition on the Coast.”* I was looking for a work of historical synthesis, a learned analysis of this transition period in the history of the northeast Pacific shore, a kind of maritime version of Richard White’s *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815*. Instead, I found a fascinating collection of primary sources that required *me* to do most of the analysis. Even Gibson’s eighty-page introduction is mostly a guide to the primary material that follows, which I expect is what the Champlain Society wanted from him.

What these sources reveal is hardly a “middle ground” but, rather, a depressing chapter in the history of ever-expanding Euro-American exploitation of the rich resources of the continent. Like White’s seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Great Lakes region, the Northwest Coast in the early nineteenth century is also

in transition. But the main players on our coast – the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC), RAC, and the American and Indigenous traders – never reach any kind of enduring accommodation such as emerged, for a while, in the *pays d’en haut* back east. Against a backdrop of rapidly depleting fur supplies, the HBC in particular schemes and connives to achieve the kind of absolute control of trade to which it had become accustomed.

With these sources Gibson offers the reader/researcher many glimpses and insights into this time and place that set the scene for the emergence of modern British Columbia. Repeated references to the brutality with which certain HBC managers carried on their business remind one of Dan Clayton’s account of the way control was exercised within and beyond the HBC’s rudimentary establishments and of the central role of violence therein. The importance of the slave trade is also highlighted, as is the degree to which external traders stimulated and participated in this large and lucrative commerce, where slaves were acquired mostly around the Salish Sea region and then sold or traded farther north. We are also reminded of the highly vulnerable nature of the British, Russian, and American trading ventures on this coast at a time when a few hundred Canadians, Americans, Brits, Hawaiians, and Asians far from home mingled with many thousands of Indigenous inhabitants who only tolerated them as long as they were useful. The seeds of coming change are visible when outbreaks of smallpox, for example, diminish the ability of Indigenous suppliers to meet the visitors’ requirements. The future can be seen at Fort Langley, too, so poorly located for the fur trade but so richly appointed in fish and timber and agricultural soil. The overall picture is one of an increasingly dominant player, the HBC, determined

to ply its trade the way it had in the heart of the continent during the eighteenth century. But the HBC’s game plan is increasingly ill adapted to this new maritime place and new century. So, by the time it has prevailed in the Northwest Coast fur trade, the prize is disappointing, with the sea otter gone and the beaver hat rapidly being replaced by silk. Before long, the HBC would find itself marginalized by new actors who played the mid-nineteenth-century game of rapid colonial conquest and industrial-scale exploitation of raw materials like fish and wood, and whose commerce on the coast the old company had pioneered earlier in the century, even as it struggled to make the fur trade work (see Mackie 1997).

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*Nothing to Write Home About:  
British Family Correspondence  
and the Settler Everyday in  
British Columbia*

Laura Ishiguro

Vancouver: UBC Press, 2019.  
308 pp. \$34.95 paper.

KRISTINE ALEXANDER  
*University of Lethbridge*

THE HISTORY of colonial British Columbia is, in many respects, well-trodden ground. Over the past few decades, scholars like Jean Barman, Cole Harris, and Adele Perry have made multiple transformative contributions to our understanding of how settler colonialism and Indigenous survivance have shaped the past and present of Canada's westernmost province. As a historian of Canada and colonialism whose work doesn't focus on British Columbia, I continue to be impressed by the volume and quality of research that exists about this place. I might also have wondered to myself, in a less-than-generous moment, if the most important arguments about this "edge of empire" and its history had already been made.

I am happy to report that Laura Ishiguro's *Nothing to Write Home About: British Family Correspondence and the Settler Everyday in British Columbia* has proven me wrong. Focusing on the years between the 1858 discovery of gold in the Fraser Valley and the start of the First World War in 1914, *Nothing to Write Home About* is a beautifully written and original contribution to the historiography of settler colonialism, British imperialism, and family ties in British Columbia and beyond. Family letters, a rich and surprisingly underexamined body of archival evidence, comprise the book's subject and primary source base. It was while reading several thousand letters exchanged by members of fifty families (mostly middle-class British settlers in British Columbia and their kin in the United Kingdom), Ishiguro writes, that she came to a surprising realization: the topics that dominate the extant scholarship on this time and place – including violence, the creation of racial hierarchies, and Indigenous resistance – were not what settler correspondents chose to write home about. Having

noticed what settler letters *didn't* say, Ishiguro decided to look closely at what they *did*. She finds that, in their letters, settler correspondents focused especially on two things: their trans-imperial family ties and various unremarkable aspects of their everyday lives – all of which worked together to frame the settler presence in British Columbia, and British imperial power more broadly, as natural and "normal."

Ishiguro's innovative and careful reading of family letters is enriched by her discussion of the postal system as networked infrastructure that was crucial to the construction and maintenance of Britain's global empire. The ease and affordability of maintaining long-distance relationships in writing, she notes, was also what "made ... migration and [family] separation thinkable, even attractive, for many Britons" (54). After discussing the imperial postal system and demonstrating that separation across vast distances was "not an aberration" for British families in this period (62), she then devotes two chapters to settler boredom and food. Focusing on these issues, Ishiguro tells us, allowed correspondents to ignore other aspects of life in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century British Columbia, including Indigenous life and settler violence and vulnerability. The book's third and final section turns to what Ishiguro calls "faultlines," or instances of "epistolary rupture, conflict, or secrecy" (27). This part of the book includes a chapter about death and an especially rich case study focused on correspondence by and about Michael Phillips, a British settler who chose not to tell his English relatives that he had married a Ktunaxa woman named Rowena and had twelve children with her. Epistolary silence and gossip, Ishiguro writes, could be effective "strategies for maintaining relationships in circumstances when colonial and

metropolitan lives, and families of origin and marriage, seemed otherwise irreconcilable” (27).

Reflections on silences and the partial nature of the colonial epistolary archive punctuate the book, as do welcome reminders that letters are material objects as well as textual evidence. I appreciated Ishiguro’s authorial voice throughout as well as her positioning of herself as a scholar who is “also a descendant and direct beneficiary of ... [the book’s] subjects” (217). *Nothing to Write Home About*, in sum, is a sophisticated and rewarding study that will be of interest to readers of BC and Canadian history, settler colonial studies, British imperial history, family history, and epistolary studies.

*Surveying the 120th Meridian  
and the Great Divide:  
The Alberta-BC Boundary  
Survey, 1918-1924*  
Jay Sherwood

Halfmoon Bay, BC: Caitlin Press,  
2019. 160 pp. \$29.95 paper.

JASON GREK-MARTIN  
*Saint Mary’s University*

IN THIS, HIS ninth monograph on surveying in British Columbia, Jay Sherwood returns with the second of two volumes on the work of the Alberta-BC Boundary Survey in the early twentieth century. The first installment, *Surveying the Great Divide* (Caitlin Press, 2017), documented the substantial collaborative effort to demarcate the southern portion of the provincial boundary along the Continental Divide between 1913 and 1917. This subsequent volume follows

the same surveyors over the next seven years, focusing on BC commissioner A.O. Wheeler’s struggles to survey the height of land northwest of Howse Pass and Alberta commissioner R.W. Cautley’s efforts to demarcate the boundary line along the 120th meridian, from the Continental Divide towards its northern terminus at the 60th parallel – work that British Columbia hoped would facilitate agricultural development in the Peace River Block. Building on the work outlined in the first volume, these prodigious efforts produced five thousand additional landscape photographs, the first detailed topographic maps of the central Rockies, and dozens of permanent boundary markers erected in the high mountain passes and at regular intervals along the 120th meridian.

Readers familiar with *Surveying the Great Divide* will find more of the same from Sherwood’s sequel. Following three scene-setting chapters, which, frankly, reproduce much of the biographical information and discussion of survey techniques found in the previous book, Sherwood provides seven chapters detailing the myriad adventures and adversities these surveyors confronted each field season. As Wheeler and Cautley usually worked separately in these later years, most chapters start with Wheeler and his team, offering evocative accounts of the daily ordeals associated with surveying the complex terrain of the central Rockies. In contrast, these chapters often conclude with a more truncated summary of Cautley’s fieldwork, reflecting the fact that, while arduous, the work of blazing a boundary line along the 120th meridian generated far fewer incidents of note. As with the previous volume, Sherwood supplements his narrative with a handsome series of black-and-white photos, some documenting the surveyors at work (or

play!), others offering up the beguiling high-altitude landscape views captured through Wheeler's phototopographic work. In later chapters, several of these historical images are again juxtaposed with contemporary "repeat photographs" taken as part of the Mountain Legacy Project, documenting notable changes to these alpine landscapes over the past century. In addition, for the first time, Sherwood includes reproductions of several of the map sheets published by the Inter-Provincial Boundary Commission – key outputs from the surveys that reveal the conceptual gap that lies between the often chaotic vicissitudes of fieldwork and the polished and placid cartography that resulted.

Alas, some familiar shortcomings from the previous volume resurface here. Like its predecessor, this work is long on detail and short on context, particularly with respect to the broader political and economic motivations driving these surveys in the postwar period. Sherwood does briefly touch on these wider issues in places, but the narrative remains tightly fixed on the trials and tribulations of fieldwork throughout. Such a circumscribed focus calls out for a series of large-scale reference maps, tracing the peripatetic journeys made by the various survey parties each season. Unfortunately, while the reproduced map sheets provide some welcome geographical context, they are rendered too small to be fully utilized as a reference for tracing these movements. Still, Sherwood has certainly produced a worthy successor to *Surveying the Great Divide*, once again delivering a comprehensive account of the demanding fieldwork required to etch the "longest interprovincial boundary in Canada" (13) into some of this country's most intractable terrain.

*When Days Are Long:  
Nurse in the North*

Amy Wilson

Halfmoon Bay, BC: Caitlin Press,  
2019. 168 pp. \$24.95 paper.

GEERTJE BOSCHMA

*University of British Columbia*

IN THIS BOOK, first published upon her retirement in 1965, Amy Wilson presents a biographical history of her career as a public health nurse in northern British Columbia and Yukon during the 1950s and 1960s. Upon completion of her nursing education in Calgary around 1930, Wilson went to work at remote Northern communities, initially in northern Alberta. In 1949, she started her public health work along the Alaska Highway in British Columbia and Yukon. Drawing from notes kept during her career, Wilson provides a vivid account of her experiences as a public health nurse. She wrote the book with a view to drawing public attention to the lives and circumstances of the remote Indigenous communities to which she regularly travelled to treat people's illnesses and to prevent contagious diseases, such as diphtheria and tuberculosis. She also conveys how she went out to help women in childbirth and to provide vaccinations or treat injuries. Her stories are interspersed with accounts of the everyday lives of the Indigenous people with whom she interacted and the connection she built with the communities and local leaders. She also describes their health care and occasionally comments on the use of traditional medicine. Her story clearly communicates her commitment to respecting Indigenous communities while also maintaining her responsibility to alleviate sickness

and to promote health in a remote area of the country she increasingly learned to love. The book relates an essential part of British Columbia's health history.

In several chronological and thematic chapters, Wilson provides a nuanced and vivid story of her work and experiences, starting with an account of a diphtheria epidemic during which she utilized a dog sled to bring medicine to the people. In the next chapter, she reflects on her upbringing, her nursing career, and her commitment to the Northern people. In subsequent chapters, she talks about challenging travel conditions and her interactions with Indigenous and white people at settlements and trading posts scattered along the Alaska Highway (as well as their health and ways of living). She responded to remote health emergencies, organized vaccination programs and X-ray surveys, and engaged with Indigenous families. She worked in close collaboration with local communities and organized her travel with help from the RCMP, bush pilots, local traders, and, occasionally, with officers of Indian affairs. She also collaborated with nurses and physicians from outposts or from the community hospital in Whitehorse. The book conveys how she was deeply committed to understanding the daily lives of Indigenous peoples and was well aware of the often difficult circumstances in which small communities sought to survive and adapt to social, geographical, and material challenges. Some intriguing photographs illustrate the geographical context of Wilson's public health work.

In a new introduction, added to the 2019 republication of the 1965 book, Amy Wilson's great-niece Laurel Deedrick-Mayne provides further context to her great-aunt's intention to draw public attention to Indigenous peoples and their difficult circumstances. Her great-aunt

also sought to convey people's resiliency and the supportive communities they were able to establish in the face of challenging social circumstances and living conditions. The book gives a vivid description of one nurse's response to remote emergencies – a nurse who was deeply concerned and committed to bringing people nursing care within social circumstances over which she had only limited control. It is a timely historical account that shines light on public health nursing work in British Columbia in the context of epidemics and the health and lives of Indigenous communities. It is both historically and currently relevant.

*New Ground: A Memoir of Art and Activism in BC's Interior*

Ann Kujundzic

Halfmoon Bay, BC: Caitlin Press,  
2019. 264 pp. \$24.95 paper.

ALIFA ZAFIRAH BANDALI  
*University of British Columbia*  
*Okanagan*

*New Ground: A Memoir of Art and Activism in BC's Interior* (2019) is more than just a memoir about Ann Kujundzic's life – it is a beautifully crafted encounter with Kujundzic and all of the histories that make her up. Beginning in her early years with what she refers to as “Scottish Roots,” we meet Kujundzic and her family and get a sense of the early memories that informed her growing up in and around Scotland. Here, she tells readers about herself in her writing, which covers landscapes from the Depression era to (before and after) the Second World War. One of the most compelling aspects of the book is its ability to think

through and make sense of Kujundzic's life across time, space, politics, and deeply personal histories that are expressed through poetics, images, and reflective writing.

Each section of the book captures periods of Kujundzic's life. The text is organized to chronicle important moments of her lived experience. It contributes to fields such as feminist theory and literature as it centres on the life histories of a woman who breaks through gendered boundaries on her own terms. Kujundzic gives readers the feeling of why stories matter, what we can do with them, and how experience has a significant role to play in writing. Although Kujundzic's text may not be a typical scholarly work in the sense that it is not set to present "data on something," her work contributes to feminist theory and practice as she plunges herself into her writing. It illustrates how she transgressed and challenged gendered roles and norms at different points in her life.

This is why I am captivated by Kujundzic's writing. She is not someone I had previously encountered. But after reading about her life, I feel I know her more intimately. She connects with readers who find themselves resonating with her experiences. Kujundzic doesn't shy away from sharing difficult moments in her life. This is demonstrated in how she thinks about her activism, especially in the chapter titled "Motherhood Should Be a Choice," in which she shares her personal testimony in order to break the silence around the question of abortion. In the Afterthoughts, she also notes: "My sense of social justice only gets stronger as I witness more of the struggles our world faces. We need to retool our individual and collective behaviour to respect the earth, which provides our most basic needs, and share our diminishing resources to make our

society work for the benefit of all, not just the privileged few" (262).

As politically engaged as Kujundzic is, I wish she had shared more stories and experiences around how she came to activism and social change. As a reader, I wondered about some of her experiences surrounding race and indigeneity in her early encounters in Canada and the United States. I wanted her to give readers more of a sense of what Indigenous solidarity means to her and what this looks like for her living in Canada. Moreover, how did she understand race operating in the United States when she spent time in Pennsylvania? That said, I appreciated Kujundzic's honest memoir and her ability to let readers into her life – one filled with family, love, politics, and countless encounters with folks met across the world during her many travels.

*Planning on the Edge:  
Vancouver and the Challenges of  
Reconciliation, Social Justice and  
Sustainable Development*

Penny Gurstein and  
Tom Hutton, editors

Vancouver: UBC Press, 2019.  
352 pp. \$99.00 cloth.

IAN ROCKSBOROUGH-SMITH  
*University of the Fraser Valley*

*Planning on the Edge: Vancouver and the Challenges of Reconciliation, Social Justice, and Sustainable Development* (2019) is a compelling edited collection written from an interdisciplinary perspective. The book treats the state of metropolitan Vancouver's development as a unique, cosmopolitan Pacific Rim cityscape poised between visions of sustainable, equitable urban regionalism

and unsustainable inequalities beholden to unchecked building development and real estate speculation. According to University of British Columbia regional planning scholars Penny Gurstein and Tom Hutton, the purpose of the volume is to “offer a constructively critical and balanced perspective on Vancouver’s development record, with an emphasis on aspects of growth and change since the 1980s” (ii).

In an incisive prologue written by the late and influential scholar of urban studies John Friedmann, the social importance of the work in which *Planning on the Edge* engages is well laid out. As Friedman suggests, a critical consideration of Vancouver’s development future is crucial since the metropolitan area is likely to reach a population that exceeds 4 million by the mid-twenty-first century, second only to Toronto as “Canada’s largest urban constellation” (3). Moreover, Friedmann notes from 2011 census data that “half the families in places such as Vancouver and Langley have to manage their lives with an annual median income per person that falls below \$22,000 for the first and \$19,000 for the second,” which for many is a life on the “edge of poverty” (6). Friedmann highlights “short-range ‘imperatives’ that have to be brought into balance within the overall planning frame, such as fully integrating – socially, economically, culturally – the hundreds of thousands of immigrants from abroad who will be arriving in the regional city in expectation of a better life, or serving the still unmet imperatives of social justice by reducing existing inequalities that range from First Nations’ claims to opening up new channels for social mobility via educational and other reforms specifically aimed at the younger generations” (8). In a city (and indeed metropolitan area) of increasingly unaffordable housing stocks that disproportionately affect Indigenous

peoples and new immigrants, this reality is clearly unsustainable and does little to offset the ostensibly eco-friendly visions of civic boosters and promoters who have made it to Vancouver and Metro Vancouver’s city halls in recent decades.

The book is divided into eleven chapters from a variety of contributors. These include Musqueam Nation leaders and researchers as well as social planners and scholars mainly associated with the University of British Columbia’s School of Community and Regional Planning. Topics covered in the volume include a section titled “Situating Vancouver in Space and Time,” which features both Indigenous and settler scholar perspectives on Vancouver’s distant and recent urban pasts. It also features an important middle section titled “Sustainability and Resilience in Metro Vancouver’s Urban Systems,” which features some helpful studies of transportation infrastructures, water management, and urban design and governance. A final section, titled “A People-Centred Approach to Planning and Development in Vancouver,” offers excellent case studies for strategies that might address inequities in the city’s infamously poor Downtown Eastside neighbourhood as well as the promotion of housing and immigrant support policies that might lessen the burden placed on people forced into precarious livelihoods by the cost of living in metropolitan Vancouver. The book ends on a hopeful note with urban and Indigenous studies scholar Leonie Sandercock’s epilogue. Sandercock focuses on the ways non-Indigenous urban planners need to learn from Indigenous leaders and thinkers about how best to decolonize and offer not only Vancouver, but also Canada, a hopeful and sustainable future – a future not based on continuous development and profit for the few.



*The Co-op Revolution:  
Vancouver's Search for Food  
Alternatives*

Jan DeGrass

Halfmoon Bay, BC: Caitlin Press,  
2019. 240 pp. \$24.95 paper.

DIANDRA OLIVER  
*Simon Fraser University*

WHEN GROWERS, producers, and practitioners self-organize around shared interests in the local foods economy, their social and economic actions – whether through a farmer’s market, buying co-op, or the production of local food – can feel tenuous on the ground. Even though the intention is to localize the food source and democratize business processes, the impact of the work is intangible: it is measured in relationships and the general feeling of “getting by.” Regardless, over the past fifty years, these actions have had enough of an economic impact to strike fear into the heart of the commercial grocery industry, resulting in a mix of co-option (Save-On-Foods 2018) and smear (Desrochers 2019). Jan DeGrass’s 2019 memoir, *The Co-op Revolution: Vancouver’s Search for Food Alternatives*, shares how a community of like-minded folks initiated many of these activisms in British Columbia, developing the food co-op movement and shaping the way many people in the province grow, sell, and eat food.

The main narrative of DeGrass’s memoir follows her own timeline as she describes her experiences working in the different parts of Collective Resource and Services (CRS) Worker’s Co-op between 1975 and 1984. Already interested in co-organizing and working, she moved west from Ontario in the mid-1970s to work

with CRS across many of its projects, including the Tunnel Canary Cannery, Queenright Cooperative Bee Keepers, Uprising Bakery, East End Food Co-op, and Fed-Up, a food wholesaler that would later become Horizon Distributors. The text includes a play-by-play narrative of the ins and outs of the life of a co-op worker and organizational founding member, while also offering a sobering reminder of the sheer level of financial, emotional, and physical labour required of those at the front of the co-op movement. Even capturing the foibles and follies of the co-op (e.g., a truckload of honey spilling down a hill on Great Northern Way), DeGrass offers readers a close look at the organizational anarchy that sometimes accompanies do-it-yourself business and community actions, making careful mention of the financial operations of the co-op and its reliance on members’ ongoing contributions. In doing so, however, DeGrass’s attempt to fill the gap and write holistically about the food co-op movement in British Columbia skirts around important discussions about neoliberalism and corporate pressure in the food landscape. While she admits that “the ‘new wave’ of co-ops did not bear out their initial promise of transforming society” (159), DeGrass delicately champions the work of CRS for propelling organic whole foods into the mainstream (158).

Although time serves as the main thematic organizer of the text, the movements to which DeGrasse was a major contributor are chronicled in a vacuum. While she accounts for the ecosystem of co-ops in British Columbia, of which she was a part, this orientation centres what she describes as *white bread*: “mostly all-white and mostly middle-class” men and women (124). Her erasure of movements led by Indigenous people and people of colour who co-existed in the same geography at the same time –

for example, the Native Alliance for Red Power (NARP), the American Indian Movement (AIM), and the Canadian Farm Workers Union – reflects the food movement’s inability to wrestle deeply with what might be at stake for those communities of which it is not a part (Maracle 1990; Simon Fraser University n.d.). Because of this omission, readers might forget that DeGrass is speaking alongside robust bodies of work concerned with decolonization, food justice, and locally grown economies (Gottlieb and Joshi 2010; Alkon and Agyeman 2011; Kepkiewicz et al. 2016). While there are times in the text where DeGrass relies on hindsight to bring up these complexities, in each of these instances – like the time she recalls performing a micro-aggression towards an Indigenous customer at Uprising Bakery and was called out by a staff member who is identified as a person of colour – she spends no more than a paragraph or two wrestling with her complicated feelings and experiences (123–24).

The meaningful lessons DeGrass attempts to pass on through the text about collaboration, resilience, and ingenuity are thus disjointed and soaked in a racial and class privilege that, while typical of many economic and social activists of the time, does not necessarily benefit either the history of the BC co-op movement or the possible strengths available to DeGrass in her own memoir. This region’s shared struggles against the industrialization of the food system go nowhere if those with privilege, like those in DeGrass’s own co-op community, refuse to explore the deepest parts of their privilege and how these get in the way of food justice. Because the text is a memoir, one could forgive DeGrass for this, but by the time she admits that members of the co-op were feeling burned out in the early 1980s, the book itself burns out

as her own involvement with the co-op wanes. Unfortunately, we miss out on so much about DeGrass’s own life and perspective as the text fizzles and the challenging parts of her experience go unexplored.

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*A Reconciliation without  
Recollection? An Investigation  
of the Foundations of Aboriginal  
Law in Canada*

Joshua Ben David Nichols

Toronto: University of Toronto  
Press, 2020. 408 pp. \$49.95 paper.

*Unsettling Canada:  
A National Wake-Up Call*  
Arthur Manuel and Grand  
Chief Ronald M. Derrickson

Toronto: Between the Lines, 2015.  
288 pp. \$29.95 paper.

*The Reconciliation Manifesto:  
Recovering the Land,  
Rebuilding the Economy*

Arthur Manuel and Grand  
Chief Ronald M. Derrickson

Toronto: Lorimer, 2017.  
312 pp. \$22.95 paper.

JIM REYNOLDS  
*Vancouver*

RESOURCE developments in British Columbia, especially the Trans Mountain and northern BC LNG pipelines, have led to nationwide opposition from some Indigenous groups as well as support from others. There have been many attempts by journalists and others to explain the background to these events. These attempts seem well intended, although somewhat superficial given the limitations of space and deadlines. Many readers will have wished for more detailed information and analysis, especially from Indigenous authors who

are directly involved in such events or who have examined the issues in greater depth.

There have been a number of books and articles by Indigenous authors dealing with politics, law, and Indigenous peoples in Canada. These include books by Harold Cardinal and William Wuttunee in response to Pierre Trudeau's 1969 White Paper, which proposed the termination of Indian status. Some writers, such as Gerald Taiaiake Alfred, Glen Coulthard, Kiera Ladner, Tracey Lindberg, and Dale Turner, deal with philosophy and political theory. There are also books by legal theorists such as John Borrows, Gordon Christie, and Sákéj Henderson. Probably the best known book is *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America* by Thomas King (2012).

One book that successfully combines personal experience with the history of Indigenous peoples in British Columbia under colonization is *Price Paid: The Fight for First Nations Survival* (2016) by Bev Sellers. Another is *Unsettling Canada: A National Wake-Up Call* (2015) by the late activist Arthur Manuel, who died in 2017. It has a foreword by Naomi Klein and an afterword by Grand Chief Ronald Derrickson, and it covers the period between the 1969 White Paper and the 2014 *Tsilhqot'*in decision, the first ruling to hold that Aboriginal title exists over particular lands. *Unsettling Canada* also discusses Indigenous politics and, in particular, the differing perspectives of some Indigenous leaders: those who are willing to surrender Aboriginal rights to get quick deals and those who are not. The book is especially helpful in setting out clearly and incisively the perspective of those who see the BC treaty process as a form of extinguishment and doubt the sincerity of non-Indigenous governments.

Just prior to his death, Arthur Manuel completed another book. Anyone wishing

to understand recent events in British Columbia and Canada should read *The Reconciliation Manifesto: Recovering the Land, Rebuilding the Economy*. It provides the required context for events going back to early European settlement up to the Trans Mountain Pipeline. Like Cardinal fifty years ago, Manuel is clear and direct and does not mince words. The Liberal government of Justin Trudeau (including then minister of justice Jody Wilson-Raybould) is denounced for its sleight of hand in claiming to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) but then recasting it so that it “would apparently change nothing in Canada because it was designed to conform to existing Canadian laws and policies” (55). UNDRIP has yet to be recognized under federal law (it has been affirmed in British Columbia), and this discussion will be of direct relevance when the government finally introduces this long-promised legislation.

Manuel writes that politicians like Justin Trudeau ignore fundamental rights to self-determination and land and merely “offer mea culpas for Canada’s past behaviour and call for reconciliation, as if all we needed was a bit of counselling, ‘an honest conversation’” (57). Canada as a society is still in denial about historical and current colonialism (62). It “was and remains a thoroughly colonial country, built on the dominance of one race over another for the purpose of seizing and occupying their land” (65). Colonialism means that Indigenous people “either live in poverty or assimilate and disappear completely into the settler society” (80). The legal underpinnings of Crown title are problematic and Canada is founded on legal quicksand (89–92). Leading cases in Aboriginal law are welcomed as moving the yardstick towards recognizing Aboriginal rights and title, but a political deal is needed to finally decolonize because “the court

cannot, finally, admit that the Crown has no legal basis to our lands because the court is itself part of the Crown ... and would therefore undercut its own legal basis to exist” (110). Meaningless, no-strings-attached “reconciliation” is cynically used to cover “any and all manipulation or diminution of our rights and title” (200). The final chapter offers a six-step program of decolonization based on recognizing the right of self-determination and meeting “our rights as title holders and decision makers on the land and our economic and cultural needs” (278).

The books by Arthur Manuel are excellent general introductions to Aboriginal law. Joshua Nichols, who is an assistant professor in the Faculty of Law at the University of Alberta and is of mixed-roots Anishinaabe ancestry, offers a much more detailed discussion of many specific issues. In contrast to Manuel’s volumes, *A Reconciliation without Recollection: An Investigation of the Foundations of Aboriginal Law in Canada* demands a lot of the reader and is for the specialist rather than the generalist. It is a work of outstanding scholarship, drawing upon the author’s background in philosophy (in which he received a PhD) as well as law (in which he received another). Although the topics covered as well as some of the conclusions reached will likely be familiar to those with a detailed knowledge of Aboriginal law, the range of references in both law and philosophy is staggering and the depth of analysis is profound. This book is by no means an easy read, but it is very rewarding for those willing to invest the time and attention to retrace what may seem to be familiar routes in order to see them from an unfamiliar viewpoint. I found especially penetrating the suggestion that “indirect rule” rather than “reconciliation” better fits the framework that the Supreme

Court of Canada is using to mediate the relationship between the Crown and Aboriginal peoples (290). The Supreme Court is engaging in the novel application of a system of colonial administration associated with the British Empire in parts of Asia and Africa. This and many other insights (often contained in page-length footnotes) certainly deserve the often overused expression “thought-provoking.”

A key argument reflected in the title of Nichols’s work is that the courts repeatedly assert and never question that the Canadian state (the “Crown”) has sovereignty, legislative power, and underlying title to land. “There is no historical moment that can be referred to that could possibly explain how the Crown acquired these powers; therefore, there can be no recollection, no memory, and no context for them” (288). This is a judicial process whereby the Crown’s unquestioned *power over* “Indians” and their lands allows it to unilaterally reconcile the duties flowing from recognition of existing Aboriginal and treaty rights in section 35 of the *Constitution Act*, 1982. “If this is what we are calling reconciliation, then it is a game whose outcome is fixed in advance,” and Aboriginal people live under a vast administrative despotism (289). Shared sovereignty, or “treaty federalism,” should replace it.

Eighty years ago, Leonard Barnes suggested that the then fashionable language describing imperial rule as a trust for Indigenous peoples was “a vague and decorative notion to which anyone can attach any meaning he pleases” (“The Empire as Sacred Trust: The Problem of Africa,” *Political Quarterly* 9, no. 14 [1938]: 503). Manuel and Nichols suggest that “reconciliation” is the modern Canadian equivalent.

*Talking Back to the Indian Act:  
Critical Readings in Settler  
Colonial Histories*

Mary-Ellen Kelm and  
Keith D. Smith

Toronto: University of Toronto  
Press, 2018. 248 pp. \$31.95 paper.

DAVID MILWARD  
*University of Victoria*

HISTORY as an academic discipline recognizes that how we understand the past is no more than that. It is how we understand the past, not necessarily what actually transpired in distant times of which we were not a part. The historian’s trade, and how he or she gets published, is very often one of challenging established understandings of past events. This also means that the primary sources of historical study – archives of past correspondences and descriptions of events – are constantly subjected to a critical eye. And that critical eye needs training to become effective. The potential to misapprehend the past without that trained critical eye can have important ramifications.

A well-known example is the Indigenous land title case *R. v. Delgamuukw*, which saw the trial judge, Justice McEachern, dismiss a constitutional Indigenous land rights claim out of hand, along with every piece of evidence in support of that claim.<sup>1</sup> Two of the many criticisms that have been made of Justice McEachern’s handling of the evidence are that he had a tendency to snip isolated quotes from source materials and then take those quotes at face value. Seen through the lens of academic history, both are cardinal sins. From the historians’ perspective,

<sup>1</sup> *R. v. Delgamuukw*, [1997] 3 SCR 1010.

a quote is an integral part of a broader whole: it cannot be properly understood without situating it, and understanding its place, within a much broader whole. The historian also weighs the words of the documents against the broader contexts that would have shaped the production of those documents. Who drafted them? What was important to the authors? What motivated the authors to draft the documents? What social forces or cultural expectations were in the background that may have shaped the wording of the documents? To take an isolated part of a document and take its wording at face value is, from the historian's perspective, likely to lead to an errant conclusion as it does not even begin to engage with the broader questions that the historian is constantly asking.<sup>2</sup>

*Talking Back to the Indian Act: Critical Readings in Settler Colonial Histories* is written by Mary-Ellen Kelm and Keith Smith, history professors at Simon Fraser University and Vancouver Island University, respectively. The book itself is an attempt to bridge the cognitive chasms in knowledge and understanding between historians and laypersons. The focus of their efforts is the *Indian Act*, the primary piece of legislation that regulates relations between the Canadian state and Indigenous peoples. Kelm and Smith invite us to view the *Indian Act* as something far more than a piece of legislation that Parliament occasionally tweaks during legislative sessions. The invitation is to gain an appreciation for the act as a living historical force that evolves over time. The act is a living phenomenon that is the site of decades-long struggles between the Canadian state's efforts to exert colonialism over Indigenous peoples and the latter's resistance to those efforts.

<sup>2</sup> Robin Fisher, "Judging History: Reflections on the Reasons for Judgment in *Delgamuukw v. BC*," *BC Studies* 95 (1992): 43–54.

*Talking Back to the Indian Act* provides numerous excerpts of past correspondences, historical archives, public speeches, and legislative debates that in some way relate to the *Indian Act*. The excerpts include not just settler Canadian actors but also Indigenous peoples who were trying to take a position against the "legalities" of colonialism. The book itself is an invitation to the reader to develop the capacity to ask the broader questions that a historian does. Although I appreciate the authors' intentions, I do wonder if it is possible for laypersons to engage in that exercise without having first acquired the specialized knowledge and training of the historian.

### *Indigenous Repatriation Handbook*

Jisgang Nika Collison,  
Sdaahl K'awaas Lucy Bell,  
and Lou-ann Neel

Victoria: Royal British Columbia  
Museum, 2019. 174 pp. \$29.95 paper.

ANNA DE AGUAYO  
*Dawson College*

The First Peoples of the Pacific coast are at the forefront of Indigenous museology and repatriation scholarship. While some communities might be just starting to tangle with the complex politics and strategies of reclaiming cultural heritage from international museums and galleries, many in British Columbia have been running their own museums, curating collections, and bringing Ancestors home for well over fifty years.

The three authors who prepared the *Handbook* are very well known in the field. Jisgang Nika Collison heads the Haida Gwaii Museum, which houses many

repatriated objects and photographs returned from around the world. Sdaahl K'awaas Lucy Bell, also from Haida Gwaii, is the head of Indigenous Collections and Repatriations at the Royal BC Museum and helped bring five hundred Ancestors home from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada. Lou-ann Neel, an artist and arts administrator for over thirty years, keeper of the Kwakwak'wakw names of K'idithle'logw, Ika'wega, and Gaa'axstalas, has also guided objects on their journeys home.

The handbook was created as a response to a 2017 symposium, "Repatriation: Moving Together Forward," held in Victoria. With over two hundred delegates, it brought together international scholars, activists, and heritage leaders from all continents. With the rise of online sources such as collection catalogues, what used to take years to track a lost piece can now take minutes. It is for this target audience – Indigenous community members who wish to bring their heritage and Ancestors home, that the handbook was written.

At seventy-three pages, the *Indigenous Repatriation Handbook* is short and succinct, but its appendices – running to eighty-nine pages – are truly mighty. From checklists on calling your first community meeting (Don't forget the refreshments!) to templates of letters to a holding museum to handling border crossing with human remains and Oral History Release Forms for Elders, it is here that the impact will be strongest.

The handbook is divided into seven short sections, such as "Organizing a Successful Repatriation," "Conducting Research," and "For Institutions Wishing to Repatriate Indigenous Peoples of BC." Interspersed with photos, quotes, and art, it is clearly written and well laid out. While the emphasis is on the Royal BC Museum's experiences, and the central case

study concerns the Haida Repatriation, the advice is both generally applicable and useful. It is well matched with the documentary film *Stolen Spirits of Haida Gwaii*.

The links, addresses, and contact names provided will change in future, and the authors are clear that this work will be updated in future editions. It would be great to see future editions take on the issues of rights to publication and royalties concerning photography, sound, and video usage. The image of Jaalen and Gwaii Edenshaw doing research for the first Haida-language film *Sgaarwaay K'uuna (Edge of the Knife)* (65) reflects the importance of the educational and cultural lives that objects and stories continue to provide. It was great to read the stories of young people encountering their Ancestors for the first time and of Elders working to add depth to the written histories found in collections. The optimism and genuine enthusiasm in the text is important and deliberate as very difficult moments emerge during a repatriation process.

To further expand the dialogue, it would be interesting to combine a reading of this book with a reading of Maureen Matthews's ethnography of the complex repatriation of a Northern Manitoba Water Drum (*Naamiwan's Drum: The Story of a Contested Repatriation of Anishnaabe Artefacts*) and the 2003 NFB film, *Totem: The Return of G'psgolox Pole*, about the repatriation of a Haisla pole from a Swedish museum.

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*Waterlogged:  
Examples and Procedures for  
Northwest Coast Archaeologists*

Kathryn Bernick, editor

Pullman: Washington State  
University Press, 2019.  
256 pp. \$32.95 paper.

PAUL A. EWONUS  
*Vancouver Island University*

*Waterlogged* will find its way to the bookshelves of almost every practising archaeologist in British Columbia. It succeeds in bringing together experience and innovation in a single source. A mix of advice for field archaeologists, empirical research results, and, critically, theoretical interpretation of wetland and wet sites sets this book apart from the usual edited volume. Several of the chapters provide preliminary reports of projects. This, however, does not result in any great reduction in the value of the book. There is enough theory included in its chapters to afford the collective work, with a balanced introduction by Kathryn Bernick, a likely place among the more influential publications on Northwest Coast archaeology.

Its contribution to wet site archaeology is not limited to this region of the globe. The procedures and some of the examples will be of interest much more widely within the discipline, and there are also sections of the book that will appeal to sociocultural anthropologists, historians, and geographers. Vancouver-based Bernick is perhaps British Columbia's foremost expert in archaeological basketry technology, with decades of experience studying Northwest Coast waterlogged cultural material.

One of *Waterlogged's* strengths, its mix of theory and practice, is also an

area for scrutiny. Where a theoretical tack is taken in the book it is most welcome, and it is invariably innovative. There are salient connections between Indigenous knowledge and archaeological interpretations. Nonetheless, there are instances where authors could have explored the meaning of results or patterns more fully, as have researchers working at wet sites on the Northwest Coast and elsewhere (e.g., Losey 2010).

Chapters are grouped into three parts. Part 1, "Discovery and Recovery," is a valuable component of the volume, becoming of increasing relevance to field and laboratory archaeologists as the two chapters that comprise it progress. The opening chapter, by Morley Eldridge, reads as much as a memoir as it does as a guide to finding wet sites, its stated goal. Eldridge's approach emphasizes his personal story, incorporating a number of anecdotes. His chapter is repetitive and it reiterates the history of Northwest Coast wet site investigation that Bernick presents in the book's introduction. Instead of organizing the chapter (which becomes somewhat disjointed by the end) around his own discoveries during his career in consulting archaeology, he would have been better off presenting his information as a thematic guide, according to, for example, microenvironment or site type. Additional illustrations of the key materials that are initial clues to the presence of wet sites would have been more helpful than those of an excavation's more striking perishable finds. Not only is Bernick's chapter on the recovery and care of wet vegetal artefacts prior to professional conservation clearly presented, but it is also a good blend of describing procedures and using examples to explain the importance of the proper recovery and temporary wet storage of waterlogged material assemblages. The guidance included in this chapter, and in



this section overall, is of particular use for early-to-mid-career archaeologists (including students) working in areas with the potential for wet sites.

In some ways, the significance of the book turns on the initial chapter in Part 2, “Fresh Perspectives.” Genevieve Hill offers a well-written presentation of archaeological site distribution data in Cowichan territory on Vancouver Island; ethnohistorical information relating to local wetlands in the form of oral histories, place names, and traditional ecological knowledge; and a clear, subtly critical, theoretical argument. Hill’s chapter lends the book a strong interpretive and regional-scale approach that is picked up in several of the following chapters, such as Stan Copp et al.’s on the lower Fraser Valley Carruthers site investigations and Jenny Cohen’s on the early Holocene Kilgii Gwaay wet site on Haida Gwaii. An additional and unconventional strength of Cohen’s chapter is her useful description of the process of learning wood and plant macrofossil (primarily seeds) analyses, which provides insight into the discipline of paleoethnobotany for the non-specialist reader.

In Part 3, “Unexpected Finds,” we are offered the results of several modest research projects, some of which are preliminary. The work led by Duncan McLaren, described in two chapters, stands out as particularly well organized and presented. The early-to-mid-Holocene waterlogged artefacts from two central BC coastal sites are important finds. The chapters by Farid Rahemtulla, and Deidre Cullon and Heather Pratt, provide initial results of the investigation of atypical wet sites: one located in an understudied region of interior British Columbia, the other a fish weir site located in a lesser-known environmental setting.

It would improve the volume if the first chapter of Part 1, the guide to finding wet sites, were divided into two separate chapters: (1) a straightforward guide to locating wet sites and (2) a detailed examination of one or more of Eldridge’s example projects. The new case study chapter would fit well in Part 2 or Part 3, strengthening either of these sections. *Waterlogged* as a whole, however, meets its aims and offers us something unique in its integration of practical explication and current research while providing an up-to-date view of wet site archaeology in the northeast Pacific.

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