

BOOK REVIEWS

*The Story of Radio Mind:
A Missionary's Journey on
Indigenous Land*

Pamela E. Klassen

Chicago: University of Chicago
Press, 2018. 336 pp. \$30.00 paper.

SEAN CARLETON
University of Manitoba

MANY BRITISH Columbians today want to learn more about the history and ongoing legacy of settler colonialism. The news of unmarked graves discovered at former residential school sites across Canada has prompted people to ask critical questions about the role Christian churches played in colonialism generally and in managing the residential school system specifically. Pamela E. Klassen's *The Story of Radio Mind: A Missionary's Journey on Indigenous Land* is an important book that grapples with the close relationship between colonialism and Christianity and provides an insightful case study of Frederick Herbert Du Vernet (1860–1924), an Anglican archbishop and self-declared scientist and storyteller who worked on the Northwest Coast in the early

1900s. *The Story of Radio Mind* will be of interest to historians, geographers, religious and communication studies scholars, and anyone wanting to better understand the connections between missionary imperialism and Canadian nation-building.

The Story of Radio Mind is not a biography of a forgotten missionary but, rather, a critical, scholarly examination of Du Vernet's role in supporting Christian science and Canadian colonialism throughout his journeys on Indigenous lands. Klassen presents Du Vernet as a "man of many paradoxes" (8). Unlike most missionaries labouring in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Du Vernet was born in what is today known as Canada. Originally from Quebec, he first worked in Ontario before journeying west, where he played an influential role on the Northwest Coast. Klassen pays special attention to Du Vernet's use of new "tools and technologies" of storytelling and proselytizing, such as photography, printing, maps, and radio (37). Radio, in particular, was something Du Vernet believed could be developed to establish a radio mind, or spiritual mind, that could "traverse distance through spiritual communication" and help build and bind Canada as a Christian nation (22).

Klassen shows how Du Vernet used these new technologies in his efforts of “re-storying” Indigenous lands to help consecrate Canada’s colonial project (37).

Klassen’s critical study helps readers to grasp how missionary work supported settler colonialism, but there are still a few errors that serve to cast Du Vernet in a more flattering light than the evidence supports. This is most notable towards the end of the book, where Klassen reflects on Du Vernet’s legacy and points to his criticism of residential schools late in life as evidence of his having a heavy conscience (121). Du Vernet’s objections, however, were similar to those of other church and state officials in the early 1900s who viewed the residential school system as being too expensive and ineffective. It is thus important that Du Vernet’s criticisms are not used, even if unintentionally, to absolve an influential Anglican archbishop of culpability in overseeing genocidal schooling for Indigenous Peoples. Indeed, day schools, which Du Vernet championed, were also part of the attack on Indigenous lifeways and the consecration of Canada as a Christian settler society, as scholars such as Helen Raptis (*What We Learned*, 2016) have outlined. Early in the book, Klassen acknowledges that “telling the story of a white man who espoused blatant racism and Christian triumphalism, but who also came to question some of the most brutal forms of racist triumphalism, requires an understanding of the meaning of a story in his context” (37). In this way, *The Story of Radio Mind* could have benefited from a deeper engagement with the context as well as with the literature on schooling and settler colonialism in British Columbia when framing Du Vernet’s final legacy.

Overall, *The Story of Radio Mind* offers an interesting window onto the workings of religion and settler colonialism on the West Coast that will appeal to

those interested in learning more about missionary imperialism and Canadian nation-building.

Resolve: The Story of the Chelsea Family and a First Nation Community’s Will to Heal

Carolyn Parks Mintz with
Andy and Phyllis Chelsea

Halfmoon Bay, BC: Caitlin Press,
2019. 224 pp. \$24.95 paper.

HEATHER MACLEOD
Thompson Rivers University

The remains of residential schools are scattered throughout Canada. Indeed, there are only three provinces (Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland and Labrador) that did not house residential schools. There is not an Indigenous community, family, or individual that has – at this point in history – escaped the devastating effects of this government-funded and church-operated attempt at assimilation. Canada marked the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on 30 September 2021, a federal statutory holiday implemented to acknowledge and consider the remnants, and all that this may involve, of residential schools in Canada. Of course, the legacy left to the citizens of Canada by these schools varies across the nation: it is, at once, a collective, cultural, community, and individual inheritance. Andy and Phyllis Chelsea’s life stories are embedded within the tragedies of the residential school system, as are their community’s – as is quite clearly articulated in their book. Theirs is a story of rising up against the odds, of recovering self, family, and community; theirs is a story of

resistance and celebration.

Carolyn Parks Mintz is the author of *The Eye of the Dragon: Women, Cancer and Courage* (EbbTide, 2004) and received the Global Calgary Woman of Vision award. She is a freelance journalist and public speaker and was twice nominated as a Woman of Distinction. A fortuitous meeting between Parks Mintz and Ivy Chelsea led to her work with Andy and Phyllis Chelsea and the book *Resolve*.

Andy and Phyllis Chelsea met in Williams Lake, at the St. Joseph's Indian Residential School, as it was known at the time. As part of the Canadian Indian residential school system, St. Joseph's operated from 1891 to 1981. The deaths of students Duncan Sticks and Augustine Allan, the investigations that revealed starvation, the neglect of the buildings, and the physical, emotional, and spiritual abuse of students are all recounted in the narrative, signalling not anomalies within the so-called schools but the status quo. This is where the couple met; this is where they spent their childhood away from their families, homes, and communities; and this is what shaped them until, as their story unfolds, they chose to carve out a new way forward.

In 1964, Andy and Phyllis married. They, for how could they not, carried the trauma of their experiences at St. Joseph's into their marriage and into their family. Parks Mintz writes:

Many of the couple's problems arose from all that was hidden, they report all that was left unspoken about the years of neglect and abuse. Given what was done to both male and female students by the residential school's priests and nuns, their ability to relate to the opposite sex and to function within intimate adult relationships had been terribly compromised, Phyllis says. (74)

In 1971, at the age of seven, their daughter, Ivy, pronounced to her parents that she and her brothers would be moving to their grandmother's home. Ivy told her mother and father that this decision was predicated on their drinking. Andy and Phyllis Chelsea chose sobriety to save, protect, and defend their family. This led the couple into a lifetime of activism and of safeguarding their community, Alkali Lake Esk'etemc First Nation.

Their book resolves to continue their activism, for it is an act of resistance and resilience. It documents their work to eliminate alcoholism, to transcend intergenerational trauma, to address and fight against the host of inequities that their community of Alkali Lake lived and experienced. The Chelsea story reveals degrees of activism that are surprising and uplifting; however, it is their and their community's refusal to be defined by governments and other settler institutions that exposes the hard and ongoing work involved in resisting stereotypes and overcoming discrimination and racism. For Andy and Phyllis Chelsea, the way forward was through fighting the system from within:

Given the clear evidence of harm created by residential schools, it is mind boggling that Canadian governments would embark on yet another program of separating Indigenous children from their families.

Andy and Phyllis were directly involved in protecting children of the Esk'etemc First Nation from being removed from their family homes, they intervened by taking action, always their go-to solution when facing injustice.

(88)

It is surprising that, rather than directly gesturing towards systemic and ongoing racism, Andy and Phyllis Chelsea ask how to dismantle and how to resurrect. Unlike many other programs, what Andy and Phyllis Chelsea address is what comes after: What comes after treatment for alcoholism? What comes after retrieving children from the residential school system, from the Sixties Scoop? Thus, they not only seek to address emerging and resurging systemic racism against the Indigenous Peoples of Canada but also carefully to consider how to mend, heal, and resurrect their community. The utter perseverance of the members of their village, their own efforts, and this story inspire all who struggle, all who seek to overcome, all who wish to acknowledge – perhaps, on Indigenous People’s Day – the harrowing effects of the residential schools of Canada. May we all be so resolved.

*Able to Lead: Disablement,
Radicalism, and the Political
Life of E.T. Kingsley*

Ravi Malhotra and
Benjamin Isitt

Vancouver: UBC Press, 2021. 374
pp. \$34.95 paper.

JANET NICOL
Vancouver

EUGENE Thornton Kingsley, an influential socialist in early British Columbia, was thirty-three years old when he adopted his revolutionary stance. Employed as a brakeman on a railway in rural Montana in 1890, he fell between two moving train cars and lost both legs. During a lengthy recovery in hospital, Kingsley read the books of Karl Marx. After his discharge,

he returned home to his wife and two young sons equipped with a pair of wooden prosthesis and a cane. Two years later Kingsley inexplicably left his family and moved to California. Authors Ravi Malhotra, a disability rights and law professor, and Benjamin Isitt, a historian, examine Kingsley’s ensuing activism through the lens of ableism, law, and the socialist movement.

Arriving first in San Francisco, Kingsley began participating in politics and, by 1895, was secretary of the Socialist Labor Party (SLP). He adopted the “impossibilist” position of SLP leader Daniel De Leon, rejecting trade unionism and other reformist measures in support of a wholesale overthrow of the capitalist system. Malhotra and Isitt suggest that Kingsley’s life circumstances as a double amputee and his detachment from the wage-earning conditions of working people may have led him to his lifelong commitment to being a “one-plank Marxist.”

Also in 1895, Kingsley delivered his first speech at the Socialist Hall. He would give hundreds more talks to working people on themes such as “The Aims of Socialism” and “Civilization versus Nature,” accumulating thousands of travel miles. Kingsley honed his debating skills as a socialist candidate in a total of four municipal and Congressional elections while residing in various locations along the U.S. Pacific Coast. He lost every election, receiving fewer than 5 percent of the vote in each run.

In 1902, Kingsley was invited to speak to coal miners on Vancouver Island. By the end of the year, he had settled in Vancouver. Soon after he was appointed managing editor of the *Western Clarion*, the newspaper of the Socialist Party of British Columbia (SPBC). He was instrumental in the realignment of the SPBC along the “impossibilist” line, and when the party was reconfigured into the Socialist Party

of Canada in 1904, Kingsley continued in a leadership position. He lived and worked in the city's downtown, running his own print shop from 1905 to 1914. Affectionately known by his comrades as "the old man," Kingsley ran on the socialist ticket in four provincial elections and two federal elections up to 1926, losing each time. His best showing, 18 percent of the vote, occurred in a provincial by-election in 1907.

Kingsley wrote on the issues of the day, including the *Komagata Maru* incident, women's suffrage, and conscription. When Canada entered the First World War, he penned an editorial condemning Germany rather than expressing global solidarity with the working class. For this stance, he was drummed out of the SPC. Politically adrift, Kingsley began writing for the BC Federation of Labour's *Federationist* newspaper in 1915 and then, in 1918, helped found the Federated Labour Party. A month before the Winnipeg General Strike, a government censor declared Kingsley "one of the most dangerous men in Canada" in a then confidential document. As the political landscape changed over the next decade, Kingsley became increasingly isolated. Following his death in 1929, aged seventy-two, there was no funeral or other public expression of remembrance.

Unfortunately, much of Kingsley's private life remains unknown, despite the diligent research of Malhotra and Isitt. As a result, the authors frequently speculate, including about Kingsley's "closeted" attitude towards his disability. Kingsley did not talk about his accident, sometimes passing as able-bodied. The reader is provided with answers regarding the fate of Kingsley's wife and children, however, and valuable insights are garnered from brief testimonials by socialist friends. Also revealing is Alexander Maitland Stephen's *The*

Gleaming Archway, a historical novel set in British Columbia and published by J.M. Dent in 1929. A lively character, Tacey, a socialist amputee who edits a newspaper, is undoubtedly based on Kingsley. His driving will was "tempered by a great kindness and was rendered strong by loneliness which sought refuge in incessant action" (40).

Kingsley did not appear to have a romantic relationship, as the authors make clear more than once. A depiction of Vancouver's bachelor scene, comprised in part of seasonal labourers, adventurers, and drifters, could add a dimension to the portrait. Would he have frequented the many workingmen's pubs and dined out in cafés? As for Kingsley's physical well-being, would a city hospital – or veterans' hospital – provide medical services if he required occasional assistance because of his disability? Tracing details about Kingsley's socialist comrades, such as Wallis Lefeaux, could also shed more light. For instance, Lefeaux ran for political office on the socialist ticket multiple times, starting in 1907, and was finally elected to the BC legislature in 1941. Had Kingsley's persistence in electoral politics influenced Lefeaux?

The E.T. Kingsley Historical Archive (www.abletolead.ca), a website curated and launched by the authors, opens the door to further research on the people and themes in this book. Despite Kingsley's intensely private nature, the authors succeed in providing original research on pieces of his personal life and a great deal more on his public contributions. Kingsley displayed a life of courage on many levels following his life-altering workplace accident. His energetic political activism gave working people a much-needed champion at a time of rampant exploitation and few social safety nets. The authors' focus on this historical figure enriches and widens the lens on BC history.

*Rivers Run through Us:
A Natural and Human History
of Great Rivers of North America*

Eric B. Taylor

Victoria, BC: Rocky Mountain
Books, 2021. 464 pp. \$38.00 paper.

DANIEL MACFARLANE
Western Michigan University

Eric B. Taylor's *Rivers Run through Us: A Natural and Human History of Great Rivers of North America* is a synthetic survey of ten waterways. In these fluid vignettes, the author covers the foundational importance of rivers to North American history and how we have engaged with and exploited them. Balancing hope and declension, science and society, Taylor wants to make us know and care about these rivers so that we will do right by them.

Each of the ten rivers receives its own focused chapter, with the book generally moving from west to east. Taylor states at the beginning that each of these chapters has a one-issue focus, such as fish, art, or irrigation (though this one-issue focus begins to break down as an organizing principle in the latter half of the book). Seven of the ten rivers covered are in western North America (the Mackenzie, Yukon, Fraser, Columbia, Sacramento-San Joaquin, Colorado, Rio Grande), while three are in eastern North America (the Mississippi, Hudson, and St. Lawrence). This is a curious choice and, given that more than 90 percent of North American surface freshwater is in the eastern half of the continent, leaves the book feeling uneven.

In addition to chapters on each of the ten rivers, there is an introduction, a brief chapter succinctly summarizing the geology and morphology of North American river systems (the "family"

of North American rivers), and a conclusion that constitutes a lengthy meditation on the future of North American rivers. Most chapters begin with a natural history and then shift to a human history. The natural history sections are nice summaries addressing the relevant geomorphology and aquatic science. The human history side combines water history and politics, more or less employing an environmental history approach. Unlike many other popular-facing books on water or river history, Taylor's book goes further than just superficially dipping its toe into the academic literature (though there are some curious omissions in terms of scholarship).

At the same time, the human history parts are, while not weak, fairly derivative; that is, rather than presenting original research, Taylor's narrative mainly summarizes a few of the books that have already been written on each of these respective waterbodies. He is at his strongest when discussing such topics as salmon, reflecting his background as a fish biologist. There are pearls of wisdom in the lengthy conclusion, which looks to the future and considers the impact of climate change, among other factors.

Rivers Run through Us would be most useful for Canadian, especially western Canadian, readers seeking an introduction to continental river histories and contemporary water issues. The primary audience would probably be readers of water-themed books by such authors as Maude Barlow, Robert Sandford, and Roy MacGregor. *Rivers Run through Us* will particularly appeal to those who want more scientific knowledge and technical detail than is usually offered in books aimed at the general or learned public.

*Orca: How We Came to Know
and Love the Ocean's Greatest
Predator*

Jason M. Colby

New York: Oxford University Press,
2018. 392 pp. \$32.95.

MARK WERNER
Cowichan Bay

Most killer whale stories are sad stories. Jason Colby's *Orca* is no exception. The nineteen short chapters take the reader on a deep and dark descent into the live-capture orca fishery that swept through the Salish Sea from 1965 to 1973. Meticulously researched and beautifully written, Colby's history showcases the cultural transformation of the region as settlers and scientists came to reckon with the entangled natures of the humans and orcas who share the Salish Sea. *Orca* provides the best view yet of the transformation of the species from villain of the Pacific Northwest into a "save-able" animal, a mascot for the unique environmental politics of British Columbia and Washington.

This story of a region – and its headlining marine megafauna – is accompanied by Colby's own family history. His father's participation in the capture industry still haunts the family, and Colby's honest engagement with this past is just one way that *Orca* will stand the test of time. Colby's insider position provided him access to many of the central figures of the captivity industry. Orca captors like Ted Griffin and Don Goldsberry had front-row seats for observing the species' adaptations to new human-made threats. By bringing us into the world of orca captors, *Orca* also invites us into the whale's world, highlighting the changing behaviours of these apex

predators to helicopters, tranquilizers, and custom-made fishing nets. We hear of how the whales learned to recognize the boat motors of specific would-be captors and how the male orcas adapted to swim with their long dorsal fins at a tilt to evade human eyes. As much as any history of the species, *Orca* foregrounds the remarkable intelligence of the killer whales and their ability to survive through extraordinary adversity.

What makes Colby's *Orca* exceptional is his ability to foreground the complexity of characters like Griffin without downplaying the incredible violence of the orca roundups. Few historians could tell Griffin's story with such complexity and grace. Colby is at his best when drawing out the motivations of those involved in the live-captures. The book's sole limitation is that it does not tread far into the stories of the activists and legislators who also proved important in protecting these whales.

While Colby's *Orca* is focused on the decade of live-captures in the Salish Sea, it also contributes to our understanding of how earlier settler activities along the Salish Sea affected orca populations (1880–1964). *Orca* makes clear that the live-capture industry was not the first threat to the Southern Resident killer whales. The overharvest of salmon in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in tandem with a "shoot-on-sight" culture among salmon fishers, proved devastating for Southern Resident killer whales. Those who oppose protections for Salish Sea orcas today would prefer to use orca population estimates just prior to the live-capture era as the baseline for species' recovery. Colby's history makes clear that we must also account for the dispersed violence of earlier generations.

Colby's *Orca* dives headlong into a dark chapter, yet still offers the reader a broader understanding of all involved

– and even some grounds for hope. Indeed, the orcas are still here. Now, we face decisions that might determine whether these orca populations can continue to survive the ever-changing Salish Sea. Colby's *Orca* is the sort of fine-grained history that can both guide our policy decisions and help us grieve this traumatic past.

Wagon Road North: The Saga of the Cariboo Gold Rush, Revised and Expanded Edition

Art Downs,
edited by Ken Mather

Victoria, BC: Heritage House, 2021.
160 pp. \$26.95 paper.

CHRISTOPHER HERBERT
Columbia Basin College

As Ken Mather reminds us in the preface to this revised and expanded edition of *Wagon Road North*, it is for a good reason that Art Downs's book has remained probably the single most popular account of the Cariboo Gold Rush since its original publication in 1960. Written in clear, succinct prose and amply illustrated with more than two hundred images, *Wagon Road North* has long been a mainstay for those interested in the gold rush that reshaped the Central Interior of British Columbia. However, at sixty years since its initial publication and forty since the last revision, *Wagon Road North* has started to show its age. Mather's updated version nicely addresses the weaknesses that have become more apparent over time while retaining the strengths of the original.

Wagon Road North is divided into sixteen chapters, the longest of which is eighteen pages; the shortest, just two. The narrative covers the initial gold

rush to the Fraser River, the rush in the Cariboo, various groups involved in the gold rush, and movement into and out of the Cariboo. It ends with several chapters on notable figures, the cemetery in Barkerville, and a look at the relics of the gold rush today. Each chapter is written in clear, engaging prose with numerous high-quality illustrations. Frequently neglected or terse in many books, the captions of the photographs are full of interesting details and nuances that greatly add to the appeal of *Wagon Road North*.

Updating a classic work is a tricky and dangerous business, but Mather has succeeded admirably here. The biggest changes in this new edition come from the addition of three much-needed chapters: on the Chinese, Indigenous Peoples, and women in the Cariboo Gold Rush, respectively. In each, Mather draws on recent scholarship to emphasize the heterogenous and multifaceted nature of gold rush society. This helps to correct one of the more problematic aspects of earlier editions: the tendency to depict the gold rush as the story of heroic white men and to minimize or denigrate the contributions of other groups and individuals. With the addition of these three chapters and some skilful editing throughout, Mather presents a far more nuanced picture of the gold rush – one that is both more accurate and more interesting to modern audiences.

The key to *Wagon Road North's* enduring popularity is that it is the quintessential BC history coffee-table book. The layout, prose, and images all make it an extremely accessible account of a key moment in the province's history. While there is now a significant body of excellent academic scholarship on the Cariboo Gold Rush and numerous other popular histories of it, Mather's updates will help ensure that *Wagon Road North* remains a mainstay for years to come.

*Sisters of the Ice: The True
Story of How St. Roch and
North Star of Herschel Island
Protected Canadian Arctic
Sovereignty*

R. Bruce Macdonald

Madeira Park, BC: Harbour
Publishing, 2021. 160 pp.
\$19.95 paper.

BARRY GOUGH
Victoria

THE POLAR North continues to have an enduring fascination for geopoliticians, tourists, and mariners. Readers of history and other disciplines attracted to this subject abound. The navigation and search for a Northwest Passage is one of the all-embracing motifs of the Canadian national historical icon. The true irony is that, although Canadian achievements have been grand and celebrated, the economic benefits are few and far between, the administrative costs gigantic. This all began centuries ago. In 1576, just before Francis Drake headed to the Pacific Ocean to corsair, Sir Martin Frobisher, backed by Elizabeth Regina, set out to find a Northwest Passage but ended up finding something quite different and altogether alarming – “fool’s gold,” or iron pyrites. Alchemists and refiners of the day worked diligently to “find” gold from the rubble brought home to Deptford on the Thames River from Baffin Island. “All that glitters is not gold,” however. Frobisher’s trio of voyages to the High Arctic wastes ruined many a financier and, by the way, discredited many an investor and prospector of trade. The Hudson’s Bay Company followed a century later, and Vitus Bering mapped the Siberian

Arctic for his Russian employers, seeking the “great lone land,” Alaska. James Cook followed for the British Admiralty; he laid open, by way of the Bering Sea, the high Alaskan shore as east as Icy Cape. In short, it took three centuries to disclose the desperately difficult geography of these northern polar seas and a then impassable passage. Canada’s attempt to defend its interest in claims to control the Northwest Passage within its two-hundred-mile sea limit has never been properly backed up with coastal surveillance, instruments of sea power, and bases of operation. U.S. and Chinese-flagged vessels transit at will, while Canadian icebreakers agreeably open up passages for cruise ships transiting the shallow and icebound wastes of these high latitudes.

Two vessels of imperishable importance survive from early days of Canadian Arctic endeavours. One, the famed RCMP vessel *St. Roch*, was the first vessel through the Northwest Passage west to east, the first vessel to navigate the Passage in both directions, and the first vessel to circumnavigate North America. Arctic achievements, we note amusingly, are defined by “firsts.” The second is *North Star of Herschel Island*, described as the ultimate ice vessel to transport furs, supplies, and people between remote Banks Island and the mainland.

The theme of this insightful and engaging book is how these two vessels protected Canadian Arctic sovereignty. The author’s sprightly narrative and new photographs tell of the perils and the prospects of Canada’s northern destiny. The story begins on Herschel Island, about eight kilometres off the Yukon coast. There, whalers, who had been hunting the bowhead whale for blubber oil, arrived in August to winter, and they promoted a local economy

with the male and female inhabitants (mainly Inuvialuit). In 1903, the Mounties arrived to provide a guardian watch. The narrative moves to the *Karluq* expedition and Viljalmur Stefansson's leadership in the Canada-sponsored Arctic expedition of 1913 to secure Canada's sovereignty against United States pre-emption (also to promote scientific inquiries). The author does not mention it, but in advance Sir Robert Borden, the prime minister of Canada, required Stefansson to take an oath of allegiance to the British Crown to ensure that any discoveries and claims he made in the right of Canada were not, in fact, done by a U.S. citizen! That expedition ended in much acrimony. The Mounties took up the cause in *St. Roch*, and again it is fascinating to see that another of Scandinavian extraction is involved in an essentially Canadian story – Norwegian-born Henry Larsen.

Author Macdonald fell in love with *North Star of Herschel Island*. Like *St. Roch*, this vessel had established a permanent Canadian presence on Banks Island. R. Bruce Macdonald acquired the vessel twenty-five years ago. His book demonstrates his affection for voyaging in icy seas and defending Canada's sovereignty. Just as *St. Roch* had been pressed into service "to maintain the right" during the Second World War, so had *North Star of Herschel Island* been important in defending the Canadian High Arctic sovereignty against the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Showing the flag, in this telling, sufficed.

The author tells his tales with devotion and compassion, and the narrative is rich with illustrations (including a photo of Marilyn Monroe in a white fox fur stole and muff, also an Inuvialuit dogsled lashed to the roof of a pilothouse). Notes, bibliography, and index complete this testament to a world worth recalling in our history though fading from view. The two vessels, old Arctic friends,

came in sight of each other in 2013 in Vancouver. *St. Roch* is preserved ashore in the Vancouver Maritime Museum; *North Star of Herschel Island* is moored at the Heritage Harbour Marina. Each holds a notable place in world maritime history.

*Capitals, Aristocrats, and
Cougars: Victoria's Hockey
Professionals, 1911–26*

Alan Livingstone MacLeod

Victoria, BC: Heritage House, 2021.
279 pp. \$26.95 paper.

JOHN WONG

Washington State University

HISTORIANS generally agree that hockey originated in eastern parts of Canada and later spread westward. In large part, this western migration of the sport followed the pattern of demographic movements. It is then not surprising that there is an abundance of literature on hockey in eastern and, especially, central Canada, the latter of which boasts a long history of the organized game. Compared to this eastern/central Canadian focus, there is a dearth of literature on the sport's development in the west. In this context, Alan Livingstone MacLeod's *Capitals, Aristocrats, and Cougars: Victoria's Hockey Professionals, 1911–26* is a much welcome contribution to hockey's history. The author divides his book into fifteen chapters, each covering a season of Victoria's hockey team in the Pacific Coast Hockey Association, and a postscript. In the preface, MacLeod states that the book's purpose is to examine "the cast of characters" assembled in making Victoria "a hockey mecca" (2). In addition, he also wants to know "the

context in which these players went about their business ... the milieu – social, cultural, political – in which they played” (2).

One only need go to the shelves of local bookstores to see that hockey is indeed Canada’s national winter sport. Much of this literature, however, is non-academic in nature, and most, if not all, focuses on the who’s, when’s, and what’s of the game. Seldom does one find a non-academic hockey history asking the why’s and how’s. In this sense, MacLeod’s first goal for *Capitals, Aristocrats, and Cougars* aligns pretty much with the rest of what has been on the bookshelves. Unlike many hockey books, MacLeod’s focuses not only on the famous but also on the lesser players, thus rescuing them from historical oblivion.

While MacLeod sets out to provide context for each of the team’s seasons, there is little analysis of how events outside hockey influenced or were influenced by Victoria’s squad. An exception is the discussion in chapter 6 of the impact on the team and its personnel, of Canada’s entry into the First World War. Much of the rest of the discussion of the social, cultural, and political developments of the time appears to be based on a random selection of headlines and entertainment news items. Chapter 3 provides an example. It starts with a discussion of British Columbia’s and Canada’s anti-Asian political campaigns, but it goes no further than making clear that there was a deep anti-Asian sentiment within the province and across the country. Readers are left to wonder how this racist movement affected the Victoria squad. Did it or did it not? Why or why not?

In part, the lack of contextual analysis can be traced to the sources MacLeod employs. His major primary sources are local newspapers, particularly the *Victoria Daily Colonist*. He also consulted

Library and Archives of Canada to locate information on those players who served in the First World War. As for secondary sources, MacLeod provides a list in the chapter on sources at the end of the book. All are non-academic hockey history books, and not one of them considers any national, provincial, and/or local political, cultural, or social developments of the time. The chapters thus resemble a random selection of news items whose focus is on hockey. One does not get a sense of how events are related, except through the games covered by the newspapers. As with most popular history books, citations are absent within the text, although at times MacLeod does tell readers that a certain item was on such and such a page of a newspaper.

All in all, *Capitals, Aristocrats, and Cougars* delivers what one expects from a non-academic history book. Those who are interested in the players on the team will not be disappointed. Given that this is a team that actually won a Stanley Cup in 1925 while playing in a city that had the second lowest population of all winners of the trophy, it is about time someone looked into its history.

*Fool’s Gold:
The Life and Legacy of
Vancouver’s Official Town Fool*

Jesse Donaldson

Vancouver: Anvil Press, 2020.
128 pp. \$18.00 paper.

DAVE HAZZAN
York University

ONCE UPON AN acid-warped time, Vancouver had its own town fool. In the late 1960s, a middle-aged family man, Joachim (Kim) Foikis, dressed in a red and blue jester’s outfit and led his

donkeys, Peter and Pan, along Georgia Street, hurling bits of pop wisdom at whomever wanted to hear them and teasing the suits and straights.

As Foikis put it: “Canada may be the land of milk and honey, but it needs spirit ... I want to help people lose some of their psychic constipation” (26).

A German immigrant with three university degrees, Foikis’s big break came on 1 April (!) 1968, when he received a Canada Council grant for \$3,500 to continue his fool activities. “Now I can give my whole time to my job,” he declared, “to live joyfully for nothing, and to spread joy and confusion” (11).

The town fool is an ancient and venerated concept. Jesse Donaldson reminds us that “the fool’s function wasn’t simply to amuse. Like in the days of Diogenes, the goal was instead to illuminate, to be a funhouse mirror held up to society – one that ridiculed its conventions, its hang-ups, and its institutions” (19).

Foikis contributed to the tradition by stalking about in and around the Vancouver Courthouse at the height of the counterculture. More than anywhere else in English Canada, the 1960s in Vancouver were times of bitter conflict – between hippies and ratepayers, developers and conservationists, and the police and anyone with hair below his collar.

Foikis took them all on. He chastised the hippies for dropping out of society and being too lazy to work, claiming that he had not dropped out but, rather, “dropped into the life of the city” (71). Foikis claimed not to do drugs (untrue) and said that he got his inspiration from his many degrees in literature and theology. “I get high on Mother Goose, not drugs,” he told a crowd at the YMCA (39).

But Vancouver’s straights hated him, drugs or no. The cartoonishly

square mayor of Vancouver, Tom Campbell, *despised* hippies – his diatribes against them were famous; his efforts against their freedoms, legendary. Regarding Foikis and his government grant, Campbell thundered to the *Vancouver Sun*: “An old-age pensioner, who’s worked all his life for his country, gets \$1,200 a year. Here’s a fellow who refused to work and they give him a \$3,500 young-age pension. Couldn’t we use it for public housing for senior citizens, retarded children, pensioners, deserving students?” (13).

Foikis replied, quoting William Blake, “‘Thou call’st me madman, but I call thee blockhead’” (13).

But the experiment was not to last. It was in 1970, while on a plane to Europe to visit his estranged family, that Foikis felt the spirit leave him (57). He would never don the fool suit again. Foikis died in Victoria in 2007, forgotten and destitute.

As other reviewers have noted, Donaldson does not have a lot to work with as far as source material goes. Entire years of Foikis’s life are blank; that few in Foikis’s family would speak *to* him while he was alive, never mind *of* him while dead, creates its own hurdles.

But Donaldson has given us an exciting – if slim – story of one man who insisted we all get high on fairytales and remember the tradition of laughing at the world.

Step into Wilderness: A Pictorial History of Outdoor Exploration in and around the Comox Valley

Deborah Griffiths, Christine Dickinson, Judy Hagen, and Catherine Siba

Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 2020.
208 pp. \$39.35 hardcover

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DRAWING primarily on a photographic collection held by the Courtenay and District Museum, *Step into Wilderness* considers “the theme of people living in the natural world and exploring both the opportunities it provides and the challenges it presents” (13). With a clear passion for the region, Griffiths, Dickinson, Hagen, and Siba detail how the natural resources and “boldly picturesque” (37) beauty of the locale led to the development of industry and recreation. Over five chapters, plus a brief introduction and conclusion, the authors rely on photographs to capture bygone moments, while arguing that these moments contribute to what the Comox Valley is today. Theirs is a notion of history as cumulative, asserting that those currently living in or visiting the area are building on the labours and imaginings of past generations.

The book showcases a remarkable collection of images spanning the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, including photographs of landscapes long since modified and buildings lost to fire. The bulk of the photographs, however, feature posed and candid moments of people at work and play, including well-

known individuals and families such as Eugene Croteau, Ruth Masters, and the Sutherlands. With the images as a backdrop, the narrative centres on capable and inventive people having fun and overcoming hardships such as natural disasters and the Great Depression. For instance, Jim and Elizabeth Forbes rebuild their hotel three times in response to a storm, fire, and flood, respectively.

Amid this coverage of resilience and community spirit, conflict among fellow residents gets short shrift. The territorial dispossession of Indigenous Peoples is glossed over as early settlers pre-empt land (no definition of this practice is provided) or buy salmon “from their Indigenous neighbours” (154). The resourcefulness of Nikkei brothers Rikichi Kawamura and Shosuke Nakano, who “rehabilitated two abandoned homesteads” (47), is discussed without mention of why these men might purchase a dilapidated farm. In these sections, Griffiths et al. could have better explored the complex and intersecting histories of the Valley’s First Peoples and settlers.

Griffiths et al. might have also considered the ecological consequences of economic development, especially since changes to the environment are well captured in the images. In fact, an aerial photograph of the Town of Comox in 1934 (136) shows how the harbour was designed to accommodate large shipping vessels, although the surrounding text does not address this. In the same chapter, declining fish stocks are mentioned but in a manner somehow removed from the actions of all the people photographed with their catches. Rather than consider the natural environment a “wilderness,” Griffiths et al. could have employed the photographs to trace shifting human-environment interactions amid growing economic activity.

That said, a thorough consideration of either social conflict or environmental

consequences would have diverted the narrative from its main objective – namely, to highlight the accomplishments of local leaders and trailblazers. To this point, the authors argue that the pictures reveal a legacy of “people acting and achieving” (193). Certainly, they do. But perhaps the questions the images raise are just as important as what they reveal. As I moved through the photographs, I was left wondering, from whose perspective am I viewing things? Why were these images selected for inclusion in the book? And how should they be interpreted? These questions go unaddressed. Clearly, Griffiths et al. consider photography a means of witnessing history, faithfully and unproblematically recording past places and events. They contend that, in knowing these images, current residents can better know themselves. Accordingly, *Step into Wilderness* will likely appeal to those already familiar with the area, keen to see the faces and places captured in these pages.

*Always Pack a Candle: A Nurse
in the Chilcotin Cariboo*

Marion McKinnon Crook

Victoria, BC: Heritage House, 2021.
256 pp. \$22.95 paper.

LINDA QUINEY
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MARION McKinnon Crook's *Always Pack a Candle* is an enlightening memoir of public health nursing in the Cariboo-Chilcotin region of British Columbia in the early 1960s. Crook's experience as a neophyte public health nurse armed with good intentions and very little practical experience is an engaging read. Presented in a popular style that renders it accessible

to a wide audience, the memoir outlines the many challenges of this rugged territory nearly sixty years ago. The description of Crook's encounters with fully loaded logging trucks, navigating snow-covered and icy winding roads, is daunting to anyone unused to the BC Interior. The clanging of the massive baby weigh scale, rattling on the back seat of Crook's government-issue Chevy, can almost be heard.

More compelling are Crook's interactions with her clients, both within the community of Williams Lake where the clinic was based and out in the rural and remote reaches of the region that she was assigned to cover. Crook clearly demonstrates the inequalities of the health and social service systems with respect of the Indigenous and white client-bases, observations made all the more relevant in the era of Reconciliation. The situation of women in this landscape, often coping with isolation, large families, many pregnancies, and a masculine aversion to birth control methods at a time when the pill had only been newly introduced, is equally powerful. The close juxtaposition of life and death in this demanding environment is clearly delineated.

The book draws the reader into Crook's world of tuberculosis testing, immunization in the early days of the polio vaccine, well-baby clinics, and the constancy of venereal disease, easily treated but demanding contact tracing that could severely affect a domestic situation. It was not all hard work. There was a budding relationship with a local rancher and the off-duty fun of stampedes, community gatherings, and even the difficulties of dressing for a dance in a subzero climate in which party shoes and silky dresses are confronted by the realities of the environment. Nursing in the Cariboo was hard work. Few nurses remained more than a year. But it could

also be immensely satisfying if the nurse was able to embrace the conditions and the community.

Crook understandably alters names and specific details for privacy. At the same time, she also fictionalizes the memoir to some extent, having taken “two friends and made them into one” and “invented a couple of characters” – a conflation of fact and fiction that is confusing at times (1). There is also an uncomfortable undertone of superiority in the presentation of Crook’s nursing

colleague, Sophie, a hospital-trained RN who lacks Crook’s own university qualifications.

Notwithstanding, Crook offers a strong introduction to public health nursing in British Columbia in the mid-twentieth century. She draws from personal experience to present an approachable entry into a minimally explored sphere of nursing history that also speaks to the awakening social discourse of the current age.