

BOOK REVIEWS

*Making and Breaking Settler
Space: Five Centuries of
Colonization in North America*

Adam J. Barker

Vancouver: UBC Press. 2021.
312 pp. \$89.95 paper.

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THIS PROVOCATIVE book does many things: it conceptualizes the larger spatial and historical processes of settler colonialism, it examines and critiques social movements in the context of enduring Indigenous sovereignties, and it unpacks the affective elements of settler identities. *Making and Breaking Settler Space* is primarily directed at scholarly and activist audiences concerned with the complex and contingent process of decolonization, and Barker is especially interested in the interplay between seemingly hegemonic structures of colonial violence and dispossession and the spaces where that hegemony is at its most frail. Those spaces, Barker argues, are where the important work begins.

Each chapter of *Making and Breaking Settler Space* begins with a short reflection

on Barker's own experiences as a white middle-class settler from suburban Ontario with aspirations to allyship. From there, each chapter works at different temporal, spatial, and social scales, from the entire "northern bloc" of colonial North America (meaning territories currently claimed by the United States and Canada), to movements such as Occupy and Idle No More, to individual settlers' orientations towards Indigenous resurgence and decolonization. Readers familiar with settler colonial theory will find an excellent and up-to-the-moment overview of the literature here, with some particularly cogent summations of what settler colonialism is and does. For example, Barker argues convincingly that settler colonialism works through "structures, systems, and stories" (8) that come from the ground up – from quotidian settler experience – as much as they come from the top down. In this, Barker makes a compelling case that it is the settler, as much as settler colonialism, that must be transformed.

Barker is perhaps at his most innovative here in his discussion of failure – not just of his own past failings as an activist, but of the larger structural weaknesses of the settler colonial project: "the cracks, flaws, and failures that expose the contingency and fragility of settler colonial projects in

these lands" (3). He draws here primarily on the work of theorist Jack Halberstam, who has argued for "low theory," in which "the messy, the interpersonal and private, the unexpected, queer, and unsuccessful" (22) can be powerful wellsprings of both critique and action. In short, Barker advocates *for* failure, encouraging us to look at "that which exists beyond hope" (187) and arguing that we must accept failure as "the irrecoverable collapse of the entire settler enterprise. Failure has to be considered as the wilful act of being bad at being settler colonizers" (209).

There is much to discuss here, from Barker's conceptual models of settler spaces to his deployment of affect theory, from his inclusion of his own autobiography to his critique of progressive, leftist, and radical social movements. In the end, though, looking for the cracks in settler colonialism's structures, systems, and stories, he argues, is one of the most important paths towards meaningful change. "There are spaces that do not conform to settler colonial structures – spaces that exist between settler colonialism and Indigeneity," Barker writes. "These are the uncertain edges where colonial logic does not overwhelmingly structure social space. By finding, engaging, and working to expand these spaces, we can develop new conceptual and practical possibilities for decolonial action" (191). As just one contribution to a rapidly growing literature on decolonization and settler subjectivities, *Making and Breaking Settler Space* offers important points of conversation and contestation as we continue to figure out what it means to live together in this place, and how we should go about doing something about it.

*Beyond Rights: The Nisga'a
Final Agreement and the
Challenges of Modern Treaty
Relationships*

Carole Blackburn

Vancouver: UBC Press, 2021.

202 pp. \$89.95 paper.

JOSHUA NICHOLS

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MOST CANADIANS are aware of the existence of treaties between Indigenous Peoples and the Crown. Phrases like "treaty rights" and "treaty relationships" form part of the everyday political vocabulary at every level of our federal system of government from territorial acknowledgments to ongoing struggles in courts, across barricades, and at boardroom tables. But this general familiarity is quickly exhausted when we ask to what the phrase "modern treaties" refers. Forecasting an average response to such a question is, at best, a game of statistical probabilities and generalization, which has more than a passing resemblance to the carnivalesque art of cold reading. Nevertheless, I believe it is safe to say that, within the popular imagination of the average Canadian, the distinctions between the historical, numbered, and modern treaties are blurred into a single mysterious amalgam. In this imaginary form the treaties are seen in the murky sepia and grey tones of the nineteenth century. They retain their binding force and are held as objects of legitimate constitutional authority, but their life within the machinery of government and the courts is largely unknown. If you were to inform our imaginary average Canadian of the fact that since the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in *Calder* in 1973 the

Canadian government has concluded twenty-six modern treaties (also referred to as comprehensive land claim agreements) with First Nations and Inuit Peoples covering approximately 40 percent of the country's land mass (3), I believe it is safe to assume that they would be surprised. This surprise is significant because the process of treaty-making is still very much a going concern within the everyday business of government in Canada. It is largely conducted by a variety of legal and political specialists, but it is unquestionably shaping the constitutional realities of our shared future.

This general lack of familiarity of precisely what the modern treaties are brings me to the significance of Carole Blackburn's book *Beyond Rights: The Nisga'a Final Agreement and the Challenges of Modern Treaty Relationships*. As its title suggests, this book is focused on one of the twenty-six modern treaties, namely the *Nisga'a Final Agreement* (also known as the *Nisga'a Treaty*), but Blackburn does not confine herself to a solitary case study. Rather, in this book she uses an examination of the *Nisga'a Treaty* as an example of the "promises and pitfalls of contemporary treaty making as a means of reforming relationships between Indigenous peoples and the state" (4). Blackburn focuses her examination of the *Nisga'a Treaty* on self-government, Aboriginal title, and membership, which form the foundational pillars of the treaty as a vehicle for both self-determination and reconciliation (144). This structure is clearly reflected in the table of contents as the book is divided into four chapters dealing with self-government, Aboriginal title, treaty citizenship, and the meaning of the treaty relationship.

The *Nisga'a Treaty* is well-suited to Blackburn's purposes in *Beyond Rights*. Among the modern treaties, the *Nisga'a*

Treaty is particularly interesting as it includes the right of self-government and recognizes Nisga'a ownership of two thousand square kilometres and treaty rights to a further twenty-seven thousand square kilometres of their traditional territory in the Nass Valley in northwestern British Columbia. The *Nisga'a Treaty* has also been the subject of significant political and legal conflict, because Gordon Campbell (then leader of the opposition in the provincial legislature) contested its constitutionality. Justice Williamson's decision in *Campbell et al. v. AG BC/AG Cda & Nisga'a Nation et al.*, 2000 BCSC 1123 maintained the constitutionality of the *Nisga'a Treaty*, and the plaintiffs did not continue litigation as Campbell became premier. This line of litigation continued as members of the Nisga'a who objected to the results of the treaty contested its constitutionality. This ultimately resulted in the BC Court of Appeal's decision in *Sga'nism Sim'augit (Chief Mountain) v. Canada (Attorney General)*, 2013 BCCA 49, which, again, maintained the constitutionality of the treaty (albeit on rather different and less compelling constitutional reasons than Justice Williamson). All this to say, the *Nisga'a Treaty* is among the best examples to choose when considering the "promises and pitfalls" of the modern treaty process as a whole.

I will conclude with a few comments on the value of this book in the ongoing project of reconciliation. The primary virtue of *Beyond Rights* is that it brings the complicated and, all too often, legally technical question of modern treaties to a wider audience. Blackburn's prose is clear, and she does not presume that the reader has prior familiarity with the modern treaty process or Aboriginal law. As a result, *Beyond Rights* is accessible to a wide range of audiences, from undergraduates in the social sciences to our imaginary everyday Canadian. Finally, and perhaps

most important, *Beyond Rights* provides a compelling account for why, despite their flaws, the modern treaties are important to the future of reconciliation in Canada and ought to have the attention of all Canadians.

*Joseph William McKay:
A Métis Business Leader in
Colonial British Columbia*

Greg N. Fraser

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

CARLA A. OSBORNE
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IN 2003, the Canadian Supreme Court handed down its decision in the case of *R. v. Powley*, triggering significant new public interest in Métis identity and history outside the familiar geography of the Canadian Prairies. That interest has taken a unique direction in British Columbia, where the Prince George Métis Elders' Society had already begun working to document the Métis communities founded in the northern interior during the fur trade in the late 1890s. Research and writing by Métis and non-Métis based in the Lower Mainland has a different emphasis to date, tending to focus more on the participation of specific Métis individuals in the province's development and history. Greg N. Fraser's fast-moving biography of Joseph William McKay is a thought-provoking contribution to this Lower Mainland trend in studies of the Métis in British Columbia.

Born in 1829 to Métis parents at Albany Factory in present-day Quebec, McKay remained closely connected

to the Hudson's Bay Company for his entire life. Like many Métis whose families had English and Scottish ancestry and the ability to finance a good education for their children, McKay did not remain on the Prairies after completing his formal education at Red River. On joining the HBC, he was promptly sent to the most southwestern of the company's holdings, arriving at Fort Vancouver in October 1844. The impending boundary settlement with the United States and the HBC's need to reorganize its operations as it withdrew from the Oregon Country opened up new opportunities for clever new hires with good connections. McKay learned quickly and soon found himself under the influential wing of James Douglas, whose own career was on the rise. After barely two years in service and at the raw age of seventeen, McKay was based at the new Fort Victoria and working as general manager of the Northwest Coast. Like so many Métis, he soon settled into a work life of extensive travel characterized by work with multiple First Nations and employees of Russian and US fur-trading companies.

Fraser emphasizes McKay's initiative because he carried out assignments supporting the expansion of the colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, including what may be his most well-known role as founder of Nanaimo. But there was far more to McKay than this. Fraser highlights McKay's independent business interests, which forced a hiatus in his early career at the HBC. It is at this point that Fraser begins to explore the growing struggle between the HBC and colonists over the direction of colonial development. Douglas's influence over the local government helped facilitate McKay's election to the local House of Assembly. McKay continued to develop social and business ties that smoothed his own transition from the HBC-dominated

era to his later career with the federal government as an Indian agent and his several published reports and memoirs.

As Fraser notes, at this time things worked differently in the far west, allowing Métis men like McKay to reach positions closed to them further east. From his years at the HBC to his post-1878 engagement with First Nations, including helping protect their reserve lands, McKay forged a distinguished career. McKay's life story shows how much of what was different in the far west was tied to the initial lack of existing colonial infrastructure, creating a temporary niche specially suited to Métis like McKay who creatively combined formal education, personal charisma, and diplomatic skill in their day-to-day work.

*What Was Said to Me:
The Life of Sti'tum'atul'wut,
a Cowichan Woman*

Ruby Peter, in collaboration
with Helene Demers

Victoria: Royal BC Museum, 2021.
240 pp. \$24.95 paper.

GEORGIA SITARA
University of Victoria

STORIES ARE a gift. When someone shares their story with us, it is an offering to know them, to know what it means to be them, to know ourselves and our society. Ruby Peter's book *What Was Said to Me* is such an offering and so much more. As an insider's history, it tells us what cannot be known through "official" written records. It talks back to power and it does so using its own conventions, narrative style, and cultural teachings. This book is a gift

to all of us.

Born in 1932, Ruby Peter (Sti'tum'atul'wut) is Cowichan from the Quamichan Reserve in Duncan, British Columbia. As a descendant of people who "dropped from the sky full grown" (17), Peter was trained by her mother, Cecilia Leo, to remember who she came from (78). Throughout the book, Peter is passing along her mother's teachings about medicines and plants; about ritual, ceremony, and prayer; about how to look after and care for others. By recounting her training, Peter trains the reader and gifts her mother's teachings to younger generations (41).

Although Peter attended day school, her life's work is a response to all that was lost (language, cultural teachings, including how to raise children and how to care for oneself) because of residential schools. As most Canadians might know by now, Indigenous children were punished in day and residential schools for speaking their languages. In day school, in a hushed voice so that the sisters could not hear her, as a child herself, Peter recounted her grandfather's stories in "Indian" to younger children (60). As an adult, Ruby continued this legacy to restore and teach the Hul'q'umi'num' language. What the state and church tried to destroy is brought to life and shared on paper, immortalized in this book. With her testimony, Sti'tum'atul'wut ensures the stories will not and can never be forgotten.

The importance of teaching children and telling children the truth opens and closes the book. Echoing her mother's counsel, Peter tells readers, "You have to start early to teach them things." Her mother told her, "Remember your child is a human being, your child is somebody." Peter implores us to honour and love children (114), to "study children so that we will know them" (118). Taking care of Elders and being taken care of by them in

return are also important threads woven throughout the book. "As her mother always said, 'Someday your caring, your loving the Old People, it will come back'" (123).

The book reveals a life of hard work, from berry picking as a family to gather the money necessary for school clothes and shoes and for farm equipment, to cleaning white people's houses, to working as a Band councillor on committees about land and education, to teaching Hul'q'umi'num' to researchers, linguists, and professors at the University of Victoria. Recounted in a humble, beautiful, lyrical, and circular way, Sti'tum'atul'wut's life story is a tour de force. It shows the relentless and often unglamorous work required to lead an ethical life, to leave the world better than we found it. To be a hope.

There is also mystery in this book. It does not reveal all. It is a guide, a treasure map as well as a treasure. As a published oral history, it helps us chart a course to find our way back home. Stories teach us. Stories help us to know what to do and what not to do (76). The stories contained in this book are wonderful reminders about the centrality of care, and of listening, for a life well lived. The book tells us how to live. Its lessons are Cowichan and invaluable to all who want to live an honourable and ethical life.

Huytseep q'u, Sti'tum'atul'wut. Thank you, Ruby Peter.

Following the Good River: The Life and Times of Wa'xaid

Briony Penn and Cecil Paul

Victoria: Rocky Mountain Books,
2020. 392 pp. \$38.00 paper.

THERESA WARBURTON

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*F*ollowing the Good River: The Life and Times of Wa'xaid is a triumph of storytelling. As a companion to Cecil Paul's *Stories from the Magic Canoe of Wa'xaid*, *Following the Good River* acts as an important intervention into both understanding the life of Wa'xaid, one of the most pre-eminent Elders living and working in British Columbia, and extending his life's work by putting it within the context of local history and what co-author Briony Penn calls "fellow paddlers." As she notes in the preface, Penn worked closely with Wa'xaid to produce this volume because he felt that "these written records would provide the dates and facts to form a framework for Western readers, should they need one" (7). In this, the co-authors offer three parts of this companion biography – "historical essays, journal entries, and interviews with fellow paddlers" (7). *Following the Good River* integrates each of these pieces with delicacy and grace.

For instance, the book begins with Wa'xaid's reflections on the Kitlope, his birthplace. Speaking directly, Wa'xaid explains both the physical geography and genealogies that live with this place and its people. Along with this description, we also get a short journal entry from 2004, in which the co-authors were travelling through the area, as well as a "Primer on Wa'xaid's Interwoven Tsimshian / Haisla Lineages." These "primers" continue throughout, including

ones on “The Confusing Geography of Haisla / Xenaksiala / Tsimshian Territories,” oolichan, coastal temperate rainforests, Wakashan languages, smallpox, whisky and gunboats, reserves, influenza, Alcan, the Canadian Pacific Railway, hydroelectric power, logging, and more. The result of these shorter interludes interspersed throughout both Wa’xaid’s storytelling and journal entries provides a comprehensive overview of his stories and offers a rich, textured vision of why they are important in the contemporary moment. Rather than only providing historical context, these primers offer a glimpse into the stakes of Wa’xaid’s stories as well, illuminating how they connect to some of the central questions about Indigenous politics, both historically and today.

Following the Good River is a careful, comprehensive tome that will be of interest to anyone who cares about Indigenous issues in British Columbia and beyond. Rooted in Wa’xaid’s incomparable storytelling about the region and his people’s place in it, this work also offers a new way of thinking about as-told-to biographies (a stalwart in the world of Indigenous literatures) by re-envisioning the co-author relationship as one that is about true collaboration rather than only about translation or repetition. *Following the Good River* offers not only a feat of incredible storytelling but also a model for how this storytelling can be done in a good way for audiences outside of the storyteller’s community. With an eye for important protocols, robust explanation, and compelling narration, *Following the Good River* is an exciting companion to *Stories from the Magic Canoe of Wa’xaid* while also being a volume that can stand on its own as a testament to the power of story, community, and collective work.

*Carrying the Burden of Peace:
Reimagining Indigenous
Masculinities through Story*

Sam McKegney

Regina: University of Regina Press,
2021. 288 pp. \$34.95 paper.

JOSH CERRETTI
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Sam McKegney’s *Carrying the Burden of Peace* seeks to bridge the gap in between the “insistence that neither individual Indigenous men nor concepts of Indigenous masculinity are irredeemable” and the recognition that some forms of masculinity “will stand forever in the way of Indigenous resurgence and decolonization” (xxvii). Situated in both literary theory and Indigenous studies, *Carrying the Burden of Peace* should appeal to scholars interested in the study of Indigenous masculinities as well as to those concerned with how to read Indigenous literatures in critical context. McKegney’s work also delves into some of the ethical complications that emerge in conducting research that attempts to confront dominant power, though readers may come to different conclusions about his success in this regard.

Carrying the Burden of Peace makes a case for fostering Indigenous masculinities resistant to settler colonialism through reading recent works by Indigenous authors not only for their critiques of toxic masculinity but also for models of non-dominant masculinities. McKegney’s approach draws upon authors from across Turtle Island, with individual chapters highlighting work by Haudenosaunee, Cree, Métis, Anishinaabe, and Northwest Coast writers. The profound influence of the work of Daniel Heath Justice

and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson is woven throughout. McKegney does not confine his inquiry to prose, examining poetry, film, testimony to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and even social media posts with the same critical yet compassionate tools. Throughout, he highlights moments of “integrity” within representations of Indigenous masculinity and frames them as necessary resources for counteracting the gendered processes of settler colonialism (175).

McKegney is well aware of the potential for such an argument to be drawn towards recentring men in decolonial resurgence, denying the pervasiveness of gendered violence, and downplaying the concerns of Indigenous women and those who are Two Spirit or otherwise unconventionally gendered. He militates against this by engaging Indigenous feminisms and queer Indigenous studies throughout in pursuit of masculinities that reject biological determinism and seek “consensual vulnerability” (92). At the same time, McKegney may be regarded as too cavalier in that, although he recognizes ethical conundrums, he nonetheless paraphrases a residential school survivor’s testimony (63), advocates for a model of Indigenous kinship that allows for non-Native relationality (155), and publishes his book with a press that he critiques for having promoted the work of an author known to have been involved in a highly public incident of domestic violence (xxiv). *Carrying the Burden of Peace* is not the kind of work that aims to resolve all contradictions, but it can be appreciated for openly acknowledging and leaning into them.

Overall, *Carrying the Burden of Peace: Reimagining Indigenous Masculinities through Story* makes a meaningful contribution to the field of Indigenous masculinity studies, within which the author has already played an

important role. Work such as this not only intervenes in ongoing discussions about what “reconciliation” looks like in the North American context but also calls for further examination of the non-Indigenous masculinities that haunt the margins of this study.

Chiru Sakura – Falling Cherry Blossoms: A Mother and Daughter’s Journey through Racism, Internment, and Oppression

Grace Eiko Thomson

Halfmoon Bay, BC: Caitlin Press,
2021. 200 pp. \$24.95 paper.

Picture Brides 写婚妻

Miyoko Kudo

Trans. By Fumihiko Torigai

Burnaby, BC: Nikkei National
Museum & Cultural Centre, 2021.
Online publication.

ANDREA GEIGER
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ONE OF THE consequences of the forced removal of people of Japanese ancestry from the BC coast and the subsequent seizure and sale of their property during the Second World War, in addition to the tremendous personal and emotional costs that this entailed, was the scattering and destruction of pre-war historical records – diaries, letters, photo albums, business accounts – that might otherwise have been preserved. Even where records remain, much of the history of pre-war Japanese immigrants

remains difficult to access due to the difficulty involved in translating Meiji- and Taisho-era Japanese language sources into English. Both factors render first-person accounts that speak to this gap in the historical record, like Grace Eiko Thomson's *Chiru Sakura – Falling Cherry Blossoms* and Fumihito Torigai's English-language translation of Miyoko Kudo's *Picture Brides 写婚妻*,¹ all the more valuable. In *Chiru Sakura*, Thomson, who was forcibly removed from the BC coast as a child in 1942, juxtaposes her own recollections of her life as a young Canadian forced to come to terms with a legacy of racism, and both wartime and postwar upheaval, with her mother's memories as recorded in an autobiographical account written to replace diaries that were left behind. In weaving these separate threads together, Thomson provides a rare glimpse of the ways in which mother and daughter, one born in Japan and one in Canada "with no lived knowledge of Japan," perceived and responded to the events that overtook their lives following the onset of war (39).

Like the elderly women interviewed by Miyoko Kudo during the early 1980s, Thomson's mother, Sawae Nishikihama, was one of many young Japanese

women born during the Meiji era who immigrated to Canada during the two decades that followed the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1908, which restricted the number of Japanese immigrant men to be admitted to Canada annually even as it opened the door to new brides. Married in accordance with Japanese law and custom, primarily concerned with the joining of two families, the transfer of the bride's name to the *koseki*, or family register, of the groom was the critical step in rendering the marriage official under Japanese law, making the groom's physical presence at the ceremony unnecessary. In contrast to the husbands of the women interviewed by Kudo, Nishikihama's husband, who had immigrated to Canada, was able to return to Japan for the wedding. Many labour migrants could not afford to do so, however, with the result that the young women they married often crossed the Pacific Ocean with just a single photograph of their new husband in hand. Together, these two books serve to complicate our understanding of the range of challenges they faced as they adapted not only to unfamiliar circumstances in a country often hostile to their presence but also to their new marriages to men they did not know, sometimes in remote locations such as lumber camps located far from town. Others, in contrast, lived in what Thomson describes as an urban village in the Powell Street area of Vancouver, where even newly arrived Japanese immigrants could feel comfortable surrounded by people speaking a range of Japanese dialects.

The onset of war ripped through this bustling community, and a second uprooting ensured that it would not be rebuilt. The Nishikihama family would spend the first part of the war deep in the BC interior in the former mining town of Minto only to be forced, as the war drew to an end, to choose between

¹ First published in five instalments in the *Asahi Weekly* in 1983, the original work was published in revised form later that year as *写婚妻: 花嫁は一枚の見合い写真を手に海を渡っていった* (Shakonzuma: hanayome wa ichimai no miai shashin o te ni umi o watatte itta) [Picture marriage wives: Brides who crossed the ocean with a single photo (of their betrothed) in hand] (Tokyo: Domesu Shuppan, 1983). Although many of the photographs in the original volume are not included in the English-language edition, it has been enhanced by photographs curated by Linda Kawamoto Reid from among those in the rich collections of the Nikkei National Museum.

repatriation – or, in the case of their Canadian-born children, expatriation – to Japan or going east, in their case to Manitoba, where they later settled in Winnipeg. In Thomson's words, they "were forced to continue their journey as outcasts, as aliens, not Canadians" (83). Going home was impossible, given the forced sale of their property in 1943. Even when the ban on returning to the coast was lifted in 1949, her parents were among those who could not afford to do so. When, in 1963, they were finally able to return to British Columbia, Nishikihama writes, it was like returning to one's *furusato*, one's home village, with its familiar smell of salt air and the mist shrouding the mountains. Thomson would go on to study art history and to work as a museum curator, including as the first executive director and curator of the Japanese Canadian National Museum from 1998 through 2002, a journey that, she explains, enabled her to come to a deeper understanding not only of her own life but also of her mother's, as well as of race and discrimination.

Miyoko Kudo's *Picture Brides* 写婚妻 itself traces the impact of not just one but two forced uprootings on the lives of thirteen women she interviewed as she travelled across Canada in an effort to locate picture brides willing to talk with her. On the one hand, this journey speaks to the complexity of pre-war Japanese society and the cultural mores of another time, reflected in the shame still associated, even in the 1980s, with having come to Canada as a picture bride. This is due, in part, to reports in pre-war Japanese-language newspapers, likely intended as object lessons, that depicted picture brides as prone to leave unhappy marriages. Not an academic historian or even, as Kudo explains in the preface to the English-language edition, a writer when she decided to conduct these interviews, her own

struggle to learn English as a foreign student in Canada leads her not only to empathize with the young women they once were but also, at times, appears to colour her interpretation, leading her to explain away the responses they gave to the questions she posed and, instead, to speculate about what they truly felt. The fact remains, however, that the glimpses the stories they shared with her of an earlier time would have been lost due to the dual dispersal of Japanese Canadians if she had not, four decades ago, embarked on her journey to gather all those she could.

*A Liberal-Labour Lady:
The Times and Life of
Mary Ellen Spear Smith*
Veronica Strong-Boag

Vancouver: UBC Press, 2021.
288 pp. \$89.95 cloth.

P.E. BRYDEN
University of Victoria

BIOGRAPHIES offer such tantalizing opportunities. Readers can generally look forward to either delving into the details of a fascinating life – the accomplishments and setbacks, the loves and losses – or they can be encouraged to enter that life themselves and view the world through the eyes of the stranger. The former approach illuminates the life, the latter the times, of the biographical subject. The various advantages of each approach illustrate why it is that "life-and-times" biographies are so popular, offering the best of both worlds.

And so it is with Veronica Strong-Boag's magnificent new biography of the remarkably underappreciated Mary Ellen Spear Smith. Even if only because of her

position as first female cabinet minister in the British Empire, Smith's name should be remembered alongside the Grace Annie Lockharts, Agnes Macphails, and Cairine Wilsons of the Canadian pantheon. But she is far less well known than these other firsts, an error of history that Strong-Boag seeks to address. In doing so, she not only offers a perspective on the life, and on the political and social times, but also something more nuanced. *A Liberal-Labour Lady* gives the reader a more embodied perspective on being a wife and mother, a politician, and an Imperialist in a world where those identities rarely co-existed and are even more rarely examined in juxtaposition. It is not always a pretty picture of either Smith or the world through her eyes, but the unique perspective that Strong-Boag offers ensures that this analysis offers surprisingly far-reaching insights.

Smith (or Mary Ellen, as she is generally referred to throughout the book) arrived in Nanaimo, British Columbia, in 1892 as part of the "settler revolution" that girded the creation of the "British World" in the years before the Second World War. She and her husband and young family came from the mining district of Britain, arrived in the mines of British Columbia, and set about making a better life for themselves and for those like them. Ambitious, hard-working, and successful, Mary Ellen Smith's life is in many ways classic fodder for biographical treatment. Figuring out why that hasn't been the case subtly drives this impeccably researched biography forward.

During her lifetime, Smith was many things that suggest a far more complex personality than the shorthand version of her accomplishments address. But she was far from unique in holding these contradictory views and positions, and so in untangling them Strong-Boag offers not just an analysis of early

twentieth-century politics but also of family and community, or social norms and widespread assumptions. Before disembarking for Canada, she married a widower and became a mother immediately and then repeatedly; she played an active role in her Methodist church and was Ralph Smith's "respected partner," although it was he who had earned acclaim as a "radical leader" known for his speeches decrying capitalism's excesses and abuse of power (30). Mary Ellen shared her husband's Liberal-Labour politics, even if she did not share in the spotlight. That began to change following their arrival in Nanaimo, where a community of newcomers proved receptive to Mary Ellen's own temperance oratory and organizational prowess. With Ralph's rise to union leadership, the two seem to have solidified their standing as leaders of the left in their adopted home.

Here the trajectory of Mary Ellen's life begins to deviate into less appealing territory – not all the time, but enough to suggest that her tale isn't quite the uplifting story of a scrappy miner's wife who succeeds in becoming the first female cabinet minister in the Empire. Mary Ellen's readiness to use racial distinctions, especially between the Chinese and European miners but also between white and Indigenous British Columbians, to leverage the achievement of equality elsewhere underlines the contradictory nature of her politics. Her leftist liberal-labourite sentiments were definitely not colour blind, as Strong-Boag makes clear. As she moved, vicariously through Ralph, into increasingly significant political positions (he served first in the BC legislature, then in Ottawa, and then back to provincial politics before his death in 1917), she developed her own political voice and style. In Ottawa, for example, she "put herself on display

on an intimidating scale,” developing intimacies with as many of the power-brokers as possible. A favourite of the Lauriers, frequent attendee at all the top balls and events, and increasingly called upon to give suffrage speeches, Mary Ellen deftly wielded the tools of soft power (69–76). She also shifted, as her husband had, into the Liberal orbit, where pragmatism often outweighed principal.

Smith moved into politics directly following her husband’s death, but she brought decades’ worth of public speaking, influence-cultivation, and political platform development with her. She also brought disillusionment with the Liberals in British Columbia and ran as an Independent Liberal in 1918. That first election victory, in spite of the Liberal machine and in the shadow of the 1916 achievement of white female suffrage in British Columbia, was Smith’s most substantial; thereafter, her share of the vote continued to drop through 1924, her last victorious campaign. Throughout the 1920s, Smith doggedly stuck to the centre of the political spectrum while others swung left, earning the ire of former supporters in labour and losing supporters from all sides of the coalition she had built. With the fight for suffrage won, gender politics took a back seat to other matters, with the once-popular Mary Ellen Smith relegated to history.

Smith’s legacy is clearly mixed. As a woman, she mostly played by men’s rules rather than changing them; as a labour advocate she aspired to middle class; as a Liberal-Labourite she shifted to the Liberals, and as a Liberal she ran as an Independent. Strong-Boag captures all these nuances through impressive research into all the contradictory corners of Smith’s life and with a compositional flair that brings both the woman and the shifting ground beneath her feet to life. She also, therefore, showcases

why Smith has been largely forgotten: her life spanned too many spaces to be neatly summarized, her accomplishments occurred alongside failures, many of her own making, and often because of a white Imperialist world view that earns no sympathy now. Not quite a woman for her times, let alone ours, Smith seemed destined to disappear. Until, that is, Strong-Boag took on the task, uncovering both the good and the bad, using Smith as a lens onto gender relations and gender politics, British Columbia and Ottawa, and electoral politics and the power of connection. The result is a refreshingly complex picture of early twentieth-century Canada and of the crooked path to power.

*A Great Revolutionary Wave:
Women and the Vote in
British Columbia*
Lara Campbell

Vancouver: UBC Press, 2020.
316 pp. \$27.95 paper.

BARBARA J. MESSAMORE
University of the Fraser Valley

A CORE RATIONALE for this book series, Lara Campbell explains, is the need to “tell regional stories” about the women’s suffrage movement (13). Campbell demonstrates, for example, that the absence of a party system in BC provincial politics before 1903 gave the province’s struggle a distinct character.

Campbell’s regional focus is also justified by her treatment of elections at the municipal level and for school boards. Property requirements, women’s marital status, and race all determined eligibility, and local officials themselves were sometimes murky on would-be voters’ qualifications. Victoria women

cast votes after the 1906 *Municipal Elections Act* forgot to exclude them as “householders,” although Premier McBride rectified the error (55).

Maria Grant, in a 1913 deputation, claimed that a new and more progressive type of society was being forged on the West Coast. Her characterization of the province’s “almost blank” past betrayed a common blindness with regard to Indigenous host societies (118). Pro-suffrage views co-existed with blatant racism: Mary Ann Cunningham, who in 1894 characterized women as among “the most advanced thinkers” (129), complained the following year that, in being denied the franchise, they were grouped with “savages.” Maria Grant asked whether it was fair that women were “placed side by side with felons, Chinamen and idiots” (122).

Campbell explains that suffragists objected to the province’s 1916 referendum on women’s enfranchisement. Although it ultimately passed with 70 percent approval, they recognized the injustice of leaving a question of basic rights up to the popular will—an analogy Gordon Campbell’s government might have remembered during its ill-fated 2002 referendum on Indigenous treaty rights.

Some clarification is needed regarding the admittedly arcane and shifting rules under which the federal franchise was conferred. The process was indeed centralized in 1885, but after decentralization in 1898, the *Dominion Elections Act*, 1920, represented a new shift to nationally standardized rules. Campbell may mislead the reader in saying that the 1920 act “made the provincial electoral list the basis of the federal vote: as a result, anyone who could not vote provincially was also excluded from voting federally” (13). In fact, women in Quebec had the federal franchise long before they qualified to vote provincially in 1940, as Campbell later acknowledges.

Rather, a 1918 act (8-9 George V, c. 20) enfranchised women who possessed “the qualification which would entitle a male person to vote at a Dominion election in the province.” The 1920 act (10-11 George V, c. 46) enfranchised men and women over age twenty-one who were not otherwise disqualified, and it eliminated the property qualification, which had varied in each province. It continued to disqualify “an Indian ordinarily resident on an Indian reservation,” prisoners, patients in mental hospitals, those receiving indoor relief, and those who “by the laws of any province in Canada, are disqualified from voting for a member of the Legislative Assembly of such province in *respect of race*.” In the book’s final chapter, Campbell engages with this important race question and the 1949 achievement of racial equality in British Columbia’s provincial vote.

British Columbia’s thriving socialist movement also informed the context. Campbell shows that, while some labour elements supported the suffrage struggle, others dismissed it as a distraction from the primary conflict between “masters and slaves” (151). Tensions intensified with the need to integrate Great War veterans into the labour market. A *BC Federationist* editorial denounced “noisy” suffragists and their “pet hobby” (155).

A diverting chapter devoted to anti-suffragists is probably the least location-specific since the same arguments were aired with tiresome frequency. A 1908 *Victoria Daily Times* editorial insisted that the average woman did not read reports of city council proceedings (74). It is tempting to speculate that male voters who did so were probably pretty thin on the ground as well. Another anti-suffragist claimed to have “too much respect” for women to wish to expose them to the coarse world of politics (82). The engaging chapter “Performing

Politics” provides vivid depictions of “political theatre” performed by BC women and suffragists around the world – “boisterous” public debates, mock and model parliaments, picnics, and parades. Despite such parallels to suffragism elsewhere, Campbell convincingly shows why place matters.

Kropotkin and Canada

Alexey G. Ivanov

Edmonton, AB: Black Cat Press,
2020. 244 pp. \$22.95 paper.

YOTAM RONEN

University of British Columbia

IN THIS TRANSLATED monograph, Alexey Gennadievich Ivanov depicts the travels of the famous anarchist theoretician Peter Alexeyevich Kropotkin (1842–1921) in Canada during 1897. Drawing on a recently uncovered archive, Ivanov details Kropotkin’s impressions of Canada and highlights Canada’s importance in the development of the thinker’s ideas for social change. Especially key in this regard is Kropotkin’s in-depth comparison of Canadian social, political, and historical developments with those he saw first-hand in Siberia some thirty years prior. According to the author, Kropotkin was convinced that the influence of the United States over Canada was one of the major reasons the dominion was demonstrably better off than Siberia. Furthermore, Ivanov convincingly argues that Kropotkin’s political convictions clouded his judgment of Canadian socio-political reality.

Kropotkin’s arrival in Canada, which is often ignored by scholars, came about

as a result of an invitation to speak at the regular congress of the British Association. Kropotkin did not have the necessary funds to make the trip, which resulted in steps taken by himself and others to make the journey possible. Among these were speaking and writing engagements that Kropotkin took on in order to fund his expenses. For Ivanov, these financial constraints explain why the anarchist did not use the trip to propagandize anarchism in Canada.

To those interested in British Columbia, this work is of special importance. Kropotkin’s 1897 travels included an organized tour from Toronto to Victoria, and an independent trip back, which was facilitated by numerous academics, government officials, and business leaders, who were eager to assist Kropotkin due to his friendship with the Canadian scholar James Mavor (1854–1925). During these travels, Kropotkin participated in geological expeditions, visited state and family farms (including Lord Aberdeen’s farm in British Columbia), met with Indigenous communities, witnessed the effects of the gold rush on Canada’s western provinces, and was confronted by anti-Chinese racism and oppression. Kropotkin’s experience in British Columbia, especially his observations of farm life in the province, proved to him the relevance of self-organization among farmers and workers on the basis of cooperation and mutual aid, and provided him with evidence for a critique of Russia’s mistreatment of Siberia. Last, as Ivanov shows, Kropotkin’s travels to Canada in general, and British Columbia in particular, provided him with the connections needed to assist the Doukhobors in their migration to Canada. Kropotkin remained in contact with the community, and for the rest of his life was convinced that, despite their religious convictions, the Doukhobors

provided one of the best examples of anarchist life.

Ivanov's monograph captures Kropotkin's analysis of Canadian reality and the way in which he related developments in Canada to global trajectories and to his political project. This positions the Canadian experience in a special place in the anarchist thinker's work, one that has significance to those interested in the history of anarchist thought. Also important is Ivanov's critique of Kropotkin's analyses; while giving ample room to Kropotkin's views, the author also confronts Kropotkin's analysis with Canadian and colonial historiography, taking the reader through blind spots and loopholes in the anarchist's impressions. This includes Kropotkin's romanticization of the gold rush and his earlier ignorance of the suffering of Chinese emigrants in British Columbia, to name but a few. While this work presents a valuable contribution to anarchist history, Canadian history, and the history of British Columbia, the author could have incorporated more recent works in Canadian history, thereby offering a more convincing interpretation.

*The Bomb in the Wilderness:
Photography and the
Nuclear Era in Canada*

John O'Brian

Vancouver: UBC Press, 2020.
244 pp. \$32.95 paper.

KARLA McMANUS
University of Regina

JOHN O'BRIAN's recent book on the photographic representation of the nuclear age focuses on the Canadian context, and readers with an interest in

photography, atomic age culture, and Canadiana will not be disappointed. *The Bomb in the Wilderness: Photography and the Nuclear Era in Canada* takes a wide view of what constitutes nuclear photography, a category of particular interest to O'Brian, professor emeritus of art history at the University of British Columbia, who has curated exhibitions, edited books, and published numerous essays on the topic over the last fifteen years.

Employing an accessible yet scholarly approach, O'Brian grounds his discussion of nuclear photography in the history of Canada's involvement in the nuclear era, dating from the Manhattan Project (1942), through to protests against atomic weapons testing in the 1960s and 1970s, and on to the state of Canada's nuclear power industry today. Throughout the book – organized into seven short thematic chapters which ebb and flow across time periods and geographical regions – there are many points of reference to Canada's often ignored or downplayed history of nuclear involvement. Each of these moments is copiously and visually rooted in the theory, language, and history of photography.

O'Brian discusses a wide variety of photographs, including official government testing records, newspaper reportage of scientists and survivors, documentary projects exploring hidden histories, artistic responses to nuclear events, commemorative postcards, and everything in between. Tellingly, not all the images included are Canadian. Yet each event that he analyzes through their photographic remains leads back in some way to the country that has played a central role in the technological development of both the military and peace atoms. This history is important to O'Brian not only as a scholar but also as a grandparent (the book is dedicated to his

grandkids), a Canadian citizen concerned by the lack of widespread knowledge about our history of nuclear involvement, and the son of a former Canadian officer in the Royal Air Force who flew against the German Luftwaffe in the barely “pre-nuclear era” (6). O’Brian’s passion for the subject comes through strongly, and his clear prose is sure to satisfy readers who are less familiar with the discourse of photographic history and theory.

This is not a history book that is beautifully illustrated: it is a visual history of how photography is (to paraphrase O’Brian) “intimately connected” to the nuclear past and present as “one of the primary ways, if not the primary way, that nuclear episodes and activities are represented and remembered” (xiii). O’Brian works to demonstrate this role on two fronts: through the reviving of often forgotten nuclear historical events in Canada (such as the historical manufacture of heavy water in Trail, British Columbia, for Chalk River, Ontario’s early weapons program), and by integrating those moments and their photographic records and responses into the transnational history of the nuclear era. As a result, O’Brian does scholars of environmental, nuclear, and Cold War-era visual culture a great service as he brings together images and ideas in an interconnected web of analysis that complicates the chronological narrative of events (a timeline is included at the back of the book for those who want it). Ultimately, O’Brian argues, this book is about the way that photography may either alert us to nuclear risk or numb us to its dangers (xiii). This is a question with which many scholars, from Susan Sontag to Judith Butler, have grappled. O’Brian’s many years of engagement with this question, and with the larger “archive” of images from the *ongoing* nuclear era, will help readers

navigate these arguments with a sure hand.

*Quietly Shrinking Cities:
Canadian Urban Population
Loss in an Age of Growth*
Maxwell Hartt

Vancouver: UBC Press, 2021. 220 pp.
\$35.95 paper.

JOHN DOUGLAS BELSHAW
Thompson Rivers University

GROWTH is good and small is beautiful. These two mid-twentieth century mottoes continue to influence thinking about cities. On balance, Queen’s University geographer Maxwell Hartt would say that the former continues to hold sway more than the latter.

Something like a hundred small-to-large centres in Canada are shrinking. From Montreal to Corner Brook to Prince George, and in many, many places in between, the arc of post-Second World War growth has long since reversed. Hartt explores the broad outlines of this phenomenon and searches for some of its causes, which include de-industrialization, globalization, and the rise of the tertiary economy in major centres. Mainly, however, he is concerned with how shrinkage is addressed. His approach includes a close examination of two communities to see what they reveal of forces driving declining numbers and the responses mounted by their respective local governments. Chatham-Kent in southwestern Ontario has only a recent history of decline but one that looks to be structurally entrenched with an aging population, fewer well-paying jobs, and a locational burden that puts it too close to

Windsor and too far from Toronto. Still, locals in southwestern Ontario remain of a mind that this is just a setback, one from which they will recover. Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM), on the other hand, has wrestled with decline for far longer – sixty years – and there is greater acceptance of the trend, although blame is passed around liberally. Both regions recognize the benefits of rightsizing, consolidating services, and so on, but the politics of doing so are far less attractive than playing for time, Ottawa-bashing, and going after a splashy grant (147).

But what a difference a pandemic makes! In December 2021 it was announced that the population of Nova Scotia had reached the one million mark, putting it within striking distance of Saskatchewan for the first time in a century. While Hartt identifies the magnetic pull of major centres (he calls it “parasitic”), he could hardly have anticipated the widespread “discovery” of working remotely. He might, however, have predicted the exodus from centres like Toronto of (a) those who cannot afford the housing market and (b) those who have cashed out at a huge profit (17). Indeed, unofficial numbers suggest that both CBRM and Chatham-Kent have actually experienced some growth over the course of the coronavirus crisis. What’s more, robust growing cities took a hit last year: Vancouver actually declined by 1 percent. Is this the start of a long-term trend? Too early to say, and it does not matter to the argument that Hartt is making: many centres in Canada are shrinking and it creates a kind of existential – not to mention fiscal – crisis.

Hartt makes the very good point that our civilization is so addicted to growth that even the suggestion of plateauing – let alone shrinkage – draws a cold stare from urban elites. In a growth-oriented culture a population change

of –3 percent or more is cause for alarm and allusions to slippery slopes. No surprise, then, that officials in Chatham-Kent were overjoyed when preliminary census numbers at the end of 2021 hinted at the return of growth. Forget “rightsizing”: they’re opening a new 400-house subdivision near Highway 401 to facilitate commuters headed to Toronto. Awaiting a rebound, they committed little energy to the question of shrinkage management.

Which is too bad, because, as Hartt says, “we need not only to accept shrinkage but also to view it as an opportunity for positive growth,” providing we appreciate that “growth” in terms of economic activity and quality of life can occur without growth in population (112).

More than that, there is the question of whether cities can be refashioned to be sustainable. An aspect of shrinkage that gets no serious attention in this study is climate change. You want an example of a shrinking population? Take Lytton, BC. An ancient community, Kumsheen/Camchin/Lytton has existed in some form or another for many hundreds of years. It had a population of about 250 in 2016; it now has a population of effectively nil because every structure within the village boundaries was incinerated by a wildfire. CBRM has experienced decline of a few percentage points annually for decades; Lytton experienced shrinkage of 100 percent literally overnight. The fact that Chatham-Kent developers are champing at the bit to open another automobile-dependent subdivision is only slightly less mad than proposing a new coal mine in Cape Breton. Indeed,

¹ Ellwood Shreve, “Chatham-Kent’s population on the upswing,” *The Chatham Daily News*, 14 February 2020, <https://www.chathamdailynews.ca/news/local-news/chatham-kents-population-on-the-upswing>.

many of the processes discussed in this volume of urbanization, suburbanization, de-urbanization, and re-urbanization, not to forget shrinkage, have to do with an economic and social/spatial order constructed on automobilism (26–27). These two communities, I should not have to underline, were built on a bedrock of fossil fuels. Shrinkage and consolidation, then, might create opportunities to address carbon footprints at a decent scale.

On the whole this is a well-written, companionable study. Some of the US comparators seem, however, to be a stretch. Even before I realized that Hartt spent time at the University of Wales, I was wondering why he did not explore the post-coal cities of the valleys of South Wales. Pontypridd had a population close to fifty thousand not long before Tom Jones was born there, and now it is home to barely thirty-one thousand. Thatcher-era mine closures and distance from this “periphery” town to the national centre were perhaps mitigated by devolution, but bitterness towards external elites manifested in strong anti-EU feeling during the Brexit vote. To my mind, this invites comparisons with Cape Breton.

This book offers lessons going forward, and not just for currently shrinking cities. Bad design hardwires problems into cities for subsequent generations to resolve. Prince George is hardly smaller than Winnipeg in terms of square kilometres (318 and 464 square kilometres, respectively) and Calgary (825 square kilometres) is vastly larger than both and spectacularly larger than Toronto (630 square kilometres). But CBRM – at 2,434 square kilometres – dwarfs them all. Think of the differences in terms of density. Rightsizing over an enormous landscape of subdivisions and villages will only look like the worst kind

of austerity: metropolitan planners need to consider that horizon.

For the rest of us, living in growing or at least mostly stable centres, what do we need to worry about? Answer: Scary national political movements. As Hartt says, “Residents in these so-called ‘loser-cities’ are fed up and letting the world know it by supporting populist, at times anti-urban, political candidates” (148). It goes beyond the scope of *Quietly Shrinking Cities* but insights like this alert us to the possibility that urban shrinkage most often means that someone is being squeezed and *that* creates conditions that foster mistrust of democratic and other institutions. When a city declines, we all ought to be interested in how that will play out.

*Luschiim's Plants: Traditional
Indigenous Foods, Materials,
and Medicines*

Dr. Luschiim Arvid Charlie
and Nancy J. Turner

Madeira Park, BC: Harbour
Publishing, 2021. 274 pp. \$29.95

AGNIESZKA
PAWLOWSKA-MAINVILLE
*University of Northern British
Columbia*

THIS IS A beautiful collaboration between Drs. Luschiim Arvid Charlie and Nancy Turner. The book is an album and encyclopaedia that identifies the different plants located within the Quw'utsun territory. After a brief introduction to Hul'qumi'num' linguistic writing systems and methodology, the book delves into the details of plants in alphabetical order. Divided into nine categories – seaweeds,

lichens, fungi and mushrooms, mosses, ferns, coniferous trees, broad-leaved trees, shrubs and vines, as well as herbaceous flowering plants – the work examines almost two hundred species. Each plant is organized by its English name (as title) followed by the Latin name, plant family, and the Hul'q'umi'num' name. Each physical description of the plant is then followed by its location and a discussion of the cultural knowledge of the plant.

The book is a catalogue of the intricate knowledge Luschiim has of his “backyard.” For those passionate about language and cultural knowledge (Traditional Ecological Knowledge, or TEK), the Hul'q'umi'num' names of plants illustrate the descriptive nature of the language and its importance to land-based practices. An example I particularly enjoyed was of the trembling aspen (*Populus tremuloides*), which in Hul'q'umi'num' literally means “little dancing tree,” *qw'iiqw'i'yul'ushulhp*. Luschiim notes that observation is increasingly being lost in our modern world, and observing aspen teaches us the way Indigenous people on Vancouver Island read the weather. In discussing the importance of observation for survival, Luschiim notes that “we’ve lost the ability to be observant ... So you watched the weather, the clouds, the winds, the way the birds behaved, how they sound” (108). The “dancing” of the aspen tree leaves is an indicator of the weather, including echo: “Echo all comes into it. Echo, or lack of it” (108). And while I’m not too certain how the echo exists in the trembling tree, I will definitely be on the lookout this summer for the “sound” the wind makes as the aspen dances.

The audience for this book may be limited to people on Vancouver Island because the knowledge associated with the plants is very culture and region specific. Having said that,

Hul'q'umi'num' knowledge of one specific plant can aid in enhancing knowledge and use of the plant species in general. For example, the dwarf wild rose, or baldhip rose (*Rosa gymnocarpa*), is a common plant across British Columbia. The rose plant is generally known for the teas made from its petals and rosehips, as these are a good source of vitamin C (158–59). I also rely on the rose plant for teas and jams, and we often snack on the large hips called *głóg* in Polish. However, I was not aware that the young offshoots can be eaten and that rose twigs can be part of the tea as well. Luschiim writes that “the leaves, twigs, petals and hips can be used to make tea, and the outer rind of the hips is edible. You can also eat the the'thqi, or young shoots” (158). Likewise, the Anishinaabeg use the red-osier dogwood (*Cornus stolonifera*) for a number of practices, including spiritual uses. I have not come across any Anishinaabeg who used the red osier to draw out poison or bee stings in the way that Luschiim describes (127).

The book is a beautiful gallery of stories about plants from the Qw'utsun worldview. The work is useful for biologists, ethnobotanists, and those families working with plants for their own use. More important, the work is an immensely helpful tool for younger Cowichan people hoping to learn more about their Hul'q'umi'num' language, plant knowledge, and cultural practices associated with plants sourced from their own territories. The book is accessible to all audiences, especially given that the photographs aid in identifying the plants and communicating how their different uses changed with time. Last, the book is notable for not only focusing on “traditional” plants but also including all plants used in the area in Luschiim's living memory. I was pleasantly surprised at the domesticated plum (*Prunus domestica*) being on the list of plants