

BOOK REVIEWS

*Standoff: Why Reconciliation
Fails Indigenous People
and How to Fix It*

Bruce McIvor

Gibsons, BC: Nightwood Editions,
2021. 208 pp. \$21.95 paper.

COREY SNELGROVE

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GIVEN THE failure of constitutional negotiations to define the meaning of Aboriginal Rights and Title recognized in section 35 of the Canadian Constitution – a failure that marks the recalcitrance of provincial and federal governments to meaningfully share power – the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) has become a key player in the politics of reconciliation. Bruce McIvor’s *Standoff: Why Reconciliation Fails Indigenous People and How to Fix It* provides readers with a portrait of the politics of reconciliation, particularly within the legal field. For non-specialists, the jurisprudence of reconciliation appears dizzying. Industry and its supporters have capitalized on this confusion to minimize obligations

and, thus, the rights of Indigenous Peoples. McIvor enters this ideological struggle on the side of Indigenous Peoples, providing clarity in support of Indigenous self-determination. Still, McIvor does not shy away from the ambivalence of the law for such struggles and so, directly and indirectly, raises important questions for the politics of reconciliation more generally.

Entering Canadian law through the 1888 *St. Catherine’s Milling* decision, the racist legal principle of the Doctrine of Discovery purports to ground Canadian sovereignty and underlying title through simple “discovery,” effacing Indigenous sovereignty (15). This Doctrine circumscribed democracy in the more expansive sense of sharing power, constituting Canada as a settler democracy. When reconciliation entered Canadian jurisprudence in the 1990s, this Doctrine was not refuted. According to the SCC, the task of reconciliation involves “reconciling the pre-existing rights of Indigenous Peoples with the assertion of Crown sovereignty” (16). For McIvor, this assertion is but “a Canadian euphemism for the Doctrine of Discovery” (16). Instead of repudiating a racist, colonial doctrine, reconciliation in the SCC remains governed by it. This is why reconciliation fails.

As an Indigenous Rights lawyer, McIvor is familiar with the deep ambivalence of the law. In some instances, the courts have been willing to view rights as sources of protection (i.e., *Desautel*) (27). But protection can also fade into control. Whereas Indigenous Peoples have interpreted section 91(24) as both protection from “local settler majorities” and recognition of their own jurisdiction, the SCC has read 91(24) in terms of control, that it facilitated Canada’s westward expansion (i.e., *Daniels*) (44). A common critique of the role of law in struggles for justice zeroes in on the appeal to the state as a protector, eclipsing the role of the state as an agent of injustice *and* a vision of freedom as sharing power. McIvor’s analysis of Indigenous Rights suggests that this is a one-sided view of such struggles. Indigenous legal struggles are not simply about protection from power but a demand to share in its exercise. One question that McIvor’s text raises for this reader – and indirectly for the politics of reconciliation – is whether the courts are able to facilitate this sharing. At times, McIvor defends the substantive obligations that come with the duty to consult and the justification for infringements, while noting that these stop short of a consent-based framework based on sharing in the exercise of power. At other times though, McIvor suggests that legal decisions can facilitate the sharing of power. This is strongest in McIvor’s analysis of *Tsilhqot’in*, where the SCC found that failure to consult and accommodate could result in the cancellation of projects and that governments and industry would be liable for damages (79). On his reading, this decision “shift[s] the duty-to-consult equation in favour of Indigenous Peoples,” which might lead government and industry to “obtain the consent of Indigenous Peoples” to “avoid the

uncertainty and risk” (79). Moreover, the declaration of title opens space for a new treaty process that might substantively share power. The ambivalence of the law exceeds the moment of the decision to the place of law in a larger social structure: namely, the gap between higher and lower courts as well as between legal decisions and state action.

Often a good description of a problem is the first step towards fixing it. If reconciliation fails because of a refusal to acknowledge Indigenous self-determination, for it to succeed requires an end to this denial and for the federal and provincial governments to enter good faith negotiations to share power. This would mark the end of settler democracy. But since the history of settler colonialism is defined by a refusal to share power, what makes things different now? While McIvor’s answer to why reconciliation fails is commendable for its clarity, it remains socially thin. If reconciliation fails because of a denial of Indigenous self-determination, why the denial? At times McIvor suggests reliance on resource extraction from Indigenous Peoples’ lands as a motivating factor (i.e., 164). The problem then becomes challenging this reliance. While the law might facilitate the sharing of power, we have already seen how it remains ambivalent. How do we get from here to there, then? For McIvor, rather than a direct confrontation with the question of state dependence on Indigenous Peoples’ land, the promise appears to rest in activating a politics of morality, where non-Indigenous Canadians – and sometimes corporations – mobilize alongside Indigenous Peoples to force the state to share power and live up to its legal obligations (see, for example, 169, 171, 173). The end of settler democracy then appears to require a shared exercise of power to share power.

I'm not sure whether a politics of morality is a sufficient vision to sustain this endeavour, however. McIvor's comments on the consent-versus-veto debate, though, is suggestive for this problem, too. Contra veto fear-mongering, McIvor points out that governments and industry might be surprised by potential alignments when pursuing the framework of consent. Might this apply to alliances that operate below and against the state and industry, and resource extraction more generally too? Perhaps just as important as the clarification of legal rights for the ideological struggle against colonization is the motivating power of Indigenous visions for a shared future.

*Mischief Making:
Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas,
Art, and the Seriousness of Play*

Nicola Levell

Vancouver: UBC Press, 2021.
168 pp. \$29.95 paper.

BRYAN MYLES
Simon Fraser University

CELEBRATED contemporary Haida artist Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas has produced a diverse body of work ranging from ink drawings to large-scale mixed media sculptures to totem poles. The artist is best known for inventing a distinct visual aesthetic known as Haida manga: a blending of various influences, most notably Haida forms and narratives and Japanese manga. In *Mischief Making*, curator and visual anthropologist Nicola Levell has composed a beautifully illustrated monograph exploring the artist's varied material creations, his playful

mixing of cultural influences, and the philosophical underpinnings that guide his practice.

Yahgulanaas belongs to the Haida Nation, which inhabits the islands of Haida Gwaii off the west coast of British Columbia, Canada. The Haida are renowned for their unique culture and artistic achievements, which have taken shape in close relationship with the lush temperate rainforests and marine environment of Haida Gwaii. Under colonial rule, Haida aesthetic traditions, embodying the spiritual, legal, and political life of the people, were discouraged by missionaries and banned by the Canadian government. Many Haida belongings were destroyed, confiscated, or stolen and handed over to museums. These measures, in addition to the residential schooling systems and coerced Christianization, nearly eradicated Haida society. The Haida have been working to rebuild and renew their traditions through a resurgence in cultural practices and political movements that began in the latter half of the twentieth century. It was into this context of resurgence, renewal, and reclamation that Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas was born in 1954.

As one might expect, Indigenous Rights, spirituality, activism, industrial resource extraction, and anti-colonialism are all prominent themes in Yahgulanaas's art. Perhaps the most distinctive feature of his work is the persistent challenge to see things in a new light and to unsettle taken for granted understandings. As Levell phrases it, "he provokes viewers to reflect on the relations between different aesthetics and systems of value and contemplate alternative ways of seeing, representing and knowing the world" (62).

The book is organized into five chapters exploring the artist's visual practice as it has unfolded in the twenty-

first century. The narrative moves from his background as an illustrator, carver, and land protector in Chapter 1 to considerations of more recent textured collages and abstract experimentations in Chapter 5. In between, Levell draws comparisons between Yahgulanaas's art and the Pop Art Movement (Chapter 2); the artist's graphic narratives and their connection to Haida society and the medium of manga (Chapter 3); and an exploration of Yahgulanaas's repurposed and culturally modified mixed media sculptures (Chapter 4).

Each chapter exemplifies the playfulness, mischief making, and punning that are ever-present in Yahgulanaas's work. The central theme running throughout the book, which is successfully communicated in the text and nearly 150 images, is the artist's commitment to what he calls "hybridity." Levell articulates hybridity in relation to postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha's notion of "third space." (8) In short, author and artist are referring to a new and independent entity that emerges from cross-cultural encounters. Notably, "third space" is also a term that will be familiar to the intended audience of students and scholars of art history, and of visual and museum anthropology.

Levell holds Yahgulanaas up as a modern artist who draws on his Indigenous heritage and various other influences. This reality – evident in the artist's work itself – effectively frees Yahgulanaas from the settler-modern/Indigenous-traditional binary that frequently haunts Indigenous artists and their creations. Levell's skill as a writer shines in her vivid descriptions and analysis of art works included and not included as illustrations. Her academic knowledge and experience as a curator is also on full display in the relationships she traces between Yahgulanaas and other contemporary

artists. However, the thick analysis tends towards a curatorial tone akin to reading extended interpretive labels in a museum or gallery. Additionally, with so much attention placed on cross-cultural mixing, borrowing, and inspiration, there is a missed opportunity for a discussion on appropriation, appreciation, and the power dynamics that define them.

The work of Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas is truly dynamic. Levell's closeness to the artist and the inclusion of his voice provides a wonderful glimpse into the ontological and epistemological foundations of his art. He is a fascinating internationally renowned artist, the imagery he creates is mind bending, and Levell's book is a wonderful exposition of that fact.

*Reading the Diaries of
Henry Trent: The Everyday
Life of a Canadian Englishman,
1842–1898*
J.I. Little

Montreal and Kingston:
McGill-Queen's University Press,
2021. 232 pp. \$37.95 paper.

ALICE LOUISE GORTON
Columbia University

IN *Reading the Diaries of Henry Trent*, historian Jack Little asks what can be learned from the diaries of a settler who "failed to adapt" to the transformations of the Victorian era and whose life, as a result, does not fit the metanarratives that historians have come to see as defining the period. His answer to this question is essentially twofold: on the one hand, Little suggests that the diary's depiction of a downwardly mobile but family-centred man disrupts those

well-worn historiographical clichés about Victorian society, including the rise of the bourgeoisie, the prevalence of separate spheres, and the nature of colonial masculinity. On the other, he proposes that because Henry's thirteen-volume diary captures a life shaped by its time, it offers an intimate perspective on "migration, colonialism, the family, the rural economy, labour, religion, subjectivity, emotion, and the natural environment" (13).

Little explores this kaleidoscope of themes using a chronological chapter structure organized into life stages, moving through "Boyhood and Youth," "Emerging Manhood" in two parts, "Manhood," and "Old Age." The first chapter traces Henry's adolescence, which was characterized by a close relationship with his father, George Trent, a self-styled colonial squire who came from considerable wealth but struggled with mental illness. Little describes young Henry's relative lack of interest in farming and explains that he preferred to hunt and trap in these years. Through the winters, he engaged in self-improvement activities – drawing, reading, studying – but worried considerably about his chances of making a career, a point lent credence by a somewhat awkward rejection from the Hudson's Bay Company at age nineteen. Henry lived in the "parental fold" until his father's death in 1857 left him with a small estate near Drummondville, Quebec, signalling his shift into "emerging manhood," as described in Chapters 2 and 3. This stage saw Henry freed from parental dependence and travelling, notably to British Columbia, where, along with thousands of others, Henry tried – and failed – to find gold. Fortunately for him, Henry had his inherited estate to fall back on, which he did in 1864. Chapter 4 reconstructs Henry's fairly late (at age thirty-eight) marriage to Eliza Caya, a dynamic and highly competent French

Canadian woman, with whom he had twelve surviving children. The book closes with a fifth chapter on his final years and a short, helpful conclusion.

By the end of the monograph, readers have gained a thorough overview of one man's life, but Little's desire to harness Henry's diary to "shed light on the broader social and cultural landscape" is a mixed success. At this aim, the book delivers in some chapters more than others. Chapter 3, for example, on Henry's trip to British Columbia, offers valuable details about the nature of the local economy on Vancouver Island, especially for those not engaged in prospecting (Henry attempted to set up a ferry service after failing to reach the Cariboo). Later sections on the farm economy, by contrast, do not provide sufficient context for understanding the Trent family farm within the history of Canadian agriculture. This criticism is due to the microscopic lens with which Little views his subject. His emphasis on personal detail is often a boon, but the narrowness of the method has its drawbacks for it fails to provide an overarching framework uniting the patchwork of topics covered. Nevertheless, despite these analytical limitations, the book will provide a welcome resource for teaching not only in its discussion of using diaries as primary sources but also in its ambitious effort to introduce and personalize such diverse topics as migration, colonialism, labour, and the family.

*The York Factory Express:
Fort Vancouver to Hudson Bay,
1826–1849*

Nancy Marguerite Anderson

Vancouver: Ronsdale Press, 2021.
300 pp. \$24.95 paper.

SCOTT P. STEPHEN
Parks Canada

THE YORK Factory Express was an integral part of the Hudson's Bay Company's transcontinental trade network in the nineteenth century. It carried men and mail from the Pacific coast to Hudson Bay, linking the Columbia and New Caledonia districts with the company's operations east of the Rockies and, ultimately, with the board of directors in England. Nancy Anderson uses the handful of journals kept by the men who led the express to give us a detailed appreciation of the scale and significance of this arduous annual journey.

Anderson is a descendant of fur traders, and her sense of personal connection with the express crews is clear. Her prologue tends to romanticize their lives somewhat, repeating well-worn tropes about happy and carefree voyageurs. However, once she begins working closely with the surviving journals – of which there are only seven – the book really gains traction. Her detailed exposition illuminates the daily grind involved in crossing the vast distances over which the HBC's operations stretched.

Part of the value of this book is in laying bare the magnitude of the challenge faced by the HBC during this period. It had to manage inventory, information, and personnel across thousands of kilometres without the benefit of telegraph, steam travel, or any other “modern” modes of travel and communication. Studies of

how firms like the HBC grappled with such challenges have been a major part of the history of modern business enterprise.

However, Anderson goes deeper than this, showing us how these big logistical issues of transcontinental enterprise played out on a very local and personal level. The rivers and landscapes through which the York Factory Express travelled are almost as much characters in her storytelling as are the human crews. This is aided by the liberal use of maps, eleven in all. The index is not as comprehensive as one might like, but Anderson's narrative provides useful signposts by following the express geographically: as another epic tale phrased it, there and back again.

The tale Anderson tells is epic indeed. If she is sometimes guilty of romanticizing the fur trade or of oversimplifying some of the broader contexts, she never loses sight of the people who made these journeys. Therein lies both the charm and the value of this book: sympathetic storytelling grounded in primary documents, liberally sprinkled with quotes to keep the reader as close as possible to the words and experiences of those who worked and travelled the York Factory Express.

*Deadly Neighbours:
A Tale of Colonialism, Cattle
Feuds, Murder, and Vigilantes
in the Far West*

Chad Reimer

Qualicum Beach, BC: Caitlin Press,
2022. 216 pp. \$26.00 paper.

JANET NICOL
Vancouver

Deadly Neighbours opens a window into the relationship between

immigrant settlers and the Semá:th (Sumas) and Stó:lō People residing in British Columbia's Sumas Prairie and Nooksack Valley during the 1870s and 1880s. Several conflicts are examined with a focus on the lynching of Louis Sam, a fifteen-year-old Semá:th boy. Extensive historical context surrounding this crime is included along with details about the long-term impact.

Enhancing the narrative is the author's knowledge of the landscape, drawn from his previous study, *Before We Lost the Lake: A Natural and Human History of Sumas Valley*, with its focus on the draining of Sumas Lake for farmland in the 1920s by settlers in Abbotsford. The lake had been a vital resource for Indigenous people for centuries. (Notably, in 2021, three years after the publication of Reimer's prescient account, Abbotsford was subject to devastating flooding and the lake "came back.") While *Deadly Neighbours* covers a shorter time frame, important stories emerge about settlers' lives and tensions within their own communities and towards their Indigenous neighbours. In both books, Reimer has chosen key incidents – the draining of a lake and the lynching of a young Indigenous man – to paint a larger picture of British Columbia's colonial past.

Louis Sam's murder at the hands of vigilantes has been written about in several popular and academic writings. See, for instance, "The Lynching of Louis Sam," by Keith Thor Carlson in *BC Studies* 109 (Spring 1996). Also note that Carlson wrote the foreword to *Deadly Neighbours*. Reimer points to one other known lynching in Canada's past, a questionable assertion inviting further investigation by Canadian historians.

Louis Sam was arrested and detained for trial in British Columbia for the

alleged murder of James Bell, a merchant on the American side of the border. A mob of about seventy Americans travelled across the border on 24 February 1884 and forced local authorities to release the young Indigenous man. No effort was made to stop the kidnapping or the ensuing lynching on Canadian soil. Nor were any of the men involved brought to justice. The author's evidence suggests people on both sides of the border were culpable. The Washington State government acknowledged the historical injustice in 2006 but British Columbia has yet to do so.

On the heels of the murder was the attempted lynching of Jimmy Poole, a young Indigenous man and friend of Louis Sam, accused without evidence as a horse thief. Poole was kidnapped and later released after enduring an ordeal at the hands of a group of white men. He lodged a complaint against eight of the white men involved, a courageous act given the racial prejudice he faced. Eventually two of the accused went before a grand jury. Indigenous witnesses for the prosecution were not deemed credible, the author observes, and the resulting acquittal was "grimly predictable" (195).

Court transcripts, legal documents, and newspaper reports are among the primary sources for this study. Significantly, Indigenous forms of justice are described and contrasted with the British-based Canadian legal system. Members of pioneer families are investigated in a critical light, breaking from conventional histories that portray them as pillars of the community and suggesting that they were effective participants in the government's colonizing aims.

A few glimpses into the lives of women are included, but there could be more exploration of their roles and perspectives. While archival photographs accompany the text, a few maps of the

Sumas Valley would have been beneficial. It could be argued that the author was remiss in not acknowledging that the account of the lynching of Louis Sam has yet to be told by an Indigenous author.

Deadly Neighbours is an important addition to the literature on settler-Indigenous relations, written in accessible prose for a wide audience. The author mines a fascinating, often overlooked, region of British Columbia, employing an inclusive, critical, and truth-seeking investigation into our collective past.

*To Be a Warrior: The
Adventurer Life and Mysterious
Death of Billy Davidson*

Brandon Pullan

Victoria: Rocky Mountain Books,
2021. 272 pp. \$28.00 paper.

JANET NICOL
Vancouver

To Be a Warrior chronicles the life of wilderness adventurer Billy Davidson (1947–2003), a rock-climbing mountaineer and ocean kayaker who spent the last thirty years of his life alone on various small islands in British Columbia’s Inside Passage. He left behind an ex-partner, Lori Anderson and their son, Westerly, both of whom were interviewed for this book, along with other family members and friends. Excerpts from Davidson’s journals and letters are quoted throughout the text. Also included are photographs, illustrated maps, and colour-plated reproductions of his stylized oil landscapes. The author, an outdoor journalist, does not provide footnotes or a bibliography; however, he does

offer a long-held passion for his subject, describing Davidson as enigmatic, legendary, and a mentor.

The book opens with the discovery of Davidson’s body near his camp three months after his last journal entry on 7 December 2003. Was his death by gunshot a suicide or murder? Speculation continues to this day. The second chapter, equally riveting, documents Davidson’s upbringing. At six years of age, Davidson and his siblings were placed by their mother at Wood’s Christian Home, an orphanage in Calgary. Davidson left the orphanage in 1964 and finished high school while living with foster parents. The author researches the institution, speaks to others who were placed there at the same time, and speculates about how Davidson was shaped by the experience.

Davidson participated in hikes while at the Home and, when he struck out on his own, pursued outdoor climbing, becoming an avid member of the Calgary Mountain Club (CMC). There were several trail-blazing climbs of Yamnuska by CMC members, and, in 1974, no one had climbed as high up Goat Butte as Davidson, who later wrote in a hut log book, “I felt what it was like to be a warrior, a person with oneself. To be at one with your surroundings” (132).

Davidson’s remarkable feats, friendships, brief family life, and “survivalist” years along the Pacific coast are detailed in the ensuing chapters, though few insights into his deepest thoughts and motivations are revealed. Still, the author has succeeded in threading together a unique biography of a type of outsider rarely considered in social histories of the province.

*Unvarnished: Autobiographical
Sketches by Emily Carr*

Edited by Kathryn Bridge

Victoria: Royal British Columbia
Museum, 2021.
218 pp. \$19.95 paper.

MARIA TIPPETT
Victoria

JUST LIKE painting and sketching, writing came as second nature to Emily Carr – a gifted and self-aware woman in more respects than one. In 1895, at the age of twenty-three, she recorded a ten-mile bicycle trip from Duncan to Lake Cowichan in doggerel verse. (This was accompanied by lightning pen and ink sketches.) During her subsequent travels to England, Alaska, and France, among other places, she not only produced doggerel verse and satirical sketches: she captured her experiences in short prose pieces. With a view to honing her writing skills, Carr took writing courses. She sought help from her “listening ladies,” Margaret Clay and Flora Hamilton Burns. And when she thought her prose-pieces were publishable she submitted them – without success – to magazines like the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Maclean’s Magazine*. But it was not until the late 1930s, after Carr met the CBC producer Ira Dilworth, that she acquired an editor who would help her become a published author.

“Cut out what & where you think fit,” she told Dilworth in May 1942, “don’t feel you have to ask me first.”¹ Acting on her advice, Dilworth helped Carr see three books through the

press: *Klee Wyck* (1941), *Book of Small* (1942), and *The House of All Sorts* (1944). A year after Carr’s death in 1945, Dilworth published her autobiography, *Growing Pains*, and seven years later, two further volumes: *Pause: A Sketch Book* and *The Heart of a Peacock*. After his own death in 1962 his niece, Phylis Inglis, who became Carr’s literary executor – edited Carr’s journals, *Hundreds and Thousands* (1966).

There still remained in Carr’s literary archive over fifty autobiographical sketches and rough drafts of short stories. When Dilworth became Carr’s literary executor, she advised him to ‘burn’ anything that he felt was ‘bad’ in the remaining manuscripts.² Though Dilworth might have considered these prose fragments best left in the bottom drawer, he did not consign them to the flames. More than fifty years later, Kathryn Bridge has turned her editorial skills to this cache of Carr’s hitherto unpublished prose and the result is *Unvarnished, Autobiographical Sketches by Emily Carr*.

Bridge claims that the material in *Unvarnished*, paralleling the previously published writings, offers an insight into Carr’s “private world.”³ Instead, I would propose that they do just the opposite. For, like all of Carr’s hitherto published writings, they were surely intended for the outside world, be it for her listening ladies to whom she read her stories or for prospective publishers. Thus, composed as part of what might be called Carr’s public writing, they naturally reinforce the persona that Carr deliberately created for herself – as poor, rejected, and generally hard-done-by.

Alternatively, an insight into Carr’s private world can best be found in

¹ Emily Carr to Ira Dilworth, 6 May 1942, MS-2181, A-1224, microfilm, British Columbia Archives (BCA).

² Carr to Dilworth, 15 December 1944, MS-2181, A-1224, microfilm, BCA.

³ Kathryn Bridge, ed., *Unvarnished: Autobiographical Sketches by Emily Carr* (Victoria: Royal BC Museum, 2021), xviii.

source material that was not intended for publication. For example, a single entry in her sister Lizzie Carr's diary during her visit to England in 1901–02 gives a quite different view of “Millie” Carr's sojourn in England than that displayed in her published writings or in the fragments now presented to us in *Unvarnished*. “Millie is looking very pretty with a Japanese comona [*sic*] over her evening dress,” Lizzie wrote as her sister left for a fancy dress dance.⁴ Emily's letter to a friend during her visit to England suggests that she was no “colonial” stranger abroad: “Nell, isn't it queer, here I am sitting down in London just as though I'd sat here all my life.”⁵ And here is a self-revealing entry from her private diary: “It must be my fault somewhere, this repelling of mankind and at the same time rebelling at having no one to shake hands with but myself.”⁶ Here are three of many examples, which can be found in her truly private writings, undercutting the Carr myth that she created for herself.

I am not, of course, suggesting that Carr's hitherto unpublished writing should not be published now. It goes without saying that Kathryn Bridge has done Carr scholars a great service by making these texts available. But they should surely be seen in context, as representing the persona that Carr knowingly created of herself and by herself: one that has reinforced the myth of her as lacking alike in social position, financial means, and artistic recognition. Carr does not need this misleading persona of the hard-done-by

artist to sustain her reputation. The best of her writings and her paintings stand by themselves and on their own considerable merits.

*For Freedom We Will Fight:
The Industrial Workers of the
World in British Columbia*

1905–1990

Larry Gambone

Edmonton: Black Cat Press, 2021.

132 pp. \$15.95 paper.

ROD MICKLEBURGH

Vancouver

MORE THAN a hundred years after losing its prominence, the fabled Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) continues to resonate as a union without parallel in the annals of labour history in North America. Besides the Wobblies' unquestioned status as the fiercest, most courageous and revolutionary of all union organizations, they had a romance that is hard to resist. Think of their street-corner, soap-box oratory, songs that are still sung today (including labour's universal anthem, “Solidarity Forever,” penned by the IWW's Ralph Chapin in 1915), the martyrdom of Joe Hill, tactics that drove authorities and bosses wild with frustration, and simply the image of thousands of itinerant workers criss-crossing the continent in search of work, carrying their cherished IWW cards, after swearing allegiance to the working class. All this has left no shortage of American labour historians to tell their story.

But the IWW was active in British Columbia, too. In fact, the province played a role right from the start.

⁴ Elizabeth Carr, diary, 31 December 1902, MS-2736, box 11, BCA.

⁵ Emily Carr to Nellie Laundry, 19 January 1900, City of Victoria Archives.

⁶ Emily Carr, *Hundreds and Thousands: The Journals of Emily Carr* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Co., 1966), 108 (entry for 6 April 1934).

As Larry Gambone points out in his overview of the IWW in British Columbia, *For Freedom We Will Fight*, it was a delegate from the Kootenays, John Riordan, who led the move at the union's founding convention in 1905 to call itself the Industrial Workers of the World rather than the Industrial Workers of America.

This is one of many tasty tidbits in Gambone's short book on IWW activities in British Columbia from 1905 to 1990. It's rather a quirky publication, presenting more of a shopping list of events than a definitive history. For that, there remains *Where the Fraser River Flows*, the comprehensive account by labour historian Mark Leier of Simon Fraser University.

Gambone, aided by researcher D.J. Alperovitz, has combed through copies of the IWW's official newspaper, the *Industrial Worker*, daily newspapers, and other publications for virtually any reference to Wobbly activities in British Columbia and has set them down, often without much context or elaboration. A number of the IWW's many colourful, larger-than-life figures, such as George Hardy, Jack King, Sam Scarlett, and "Big Jim" Thompson show up in the book. One would have liked to know more about them than the brief snapshots Gambone provides.

Yet, conversely, the book's predominantly barebone listings effectively showcase the relentless waves of suppression unleashed against the IWW. Apart from their several major strikes, even minor actions by IWW members evoked arrests, jailings, fines, blacklisting, beatings, and sometimes deportations, until the union was banned outright in 1918. Gambone notes them all. He is also the first to take the IWW's BC history beyond its heyday and subsequent decline in the 1920s. He shows the union could still draw a crowd for a

number of years, given the right speaker, while maintaining its Vancouver union hall until 1935. But by 1951 the Vancouver branch was reporting a mere three dollars in dues and two dollars in initiations.

A surprising mini-revival took place in the 1960s and thereafter, when the IWW was discovered by a number of student radicals who were accepted into the working-class union as "brain workers." Perhaps because Gambone was among them, with no need to rely on old newspapers, this produces the longest – although not uninteresting – chapter in the book, despite its irrelevance to the ongoing world of working-class struggle. Should anyone still care about the IWW in 2022? Yes, Gambone contends. He writes: "History shows that a marginal force can have impact [*sic*] on events, when certain individuals pick up their ideas and practices, and utilize them under different circumstances" (70). Although *For Freedom We Will Fight* falls short as history (Gambone describes it as an overview), it is nonetheless a useful addition to the canon of IWW writings as it shines further BC light on this remarkable union and provides enough material to whet one's appetite to know more.

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*Solidarity: Canada's Unknown
Revolution of 1983*

David Spaner

Vancouver: Ronsdale Press, 2021.
240 pp. \$24.95 paper.

BRYAN D. PALMER
Trent University

THIS IS A book in search of a genre. As history, the curtain comes down on this story after a disappointing first night. But as theatre, it would undoubtedly have a longer and more satisfying run.

The author, David Spaner, is a journalist with a countercultural 1960s bent. His politics congeal Abbie Hoffman and Emma Goldman, the punk band DOA, the left wing of the modern-day NDP, and a nostalgic fondness for the class struggles of the 1930s. Spaner lived through and covered the momentous events of 1983 in British Columbia known as Solidarity, writing for a New Westminster paper, the *Columbian*.

Solidarity began not as a movement from below but as a lowering of the boom from above. It ended, sadly, not dissimilarly.

Almost forty years ago, a Social Credit government led by Bill Bennett introduced twenty-six pieces of legislation that dismantled collective bargaining rights in the public sector and gutted provisioning in health care, welfare, and an array of social services. This 1983 assault, done in the name of downsizing government and implementing fiscal restraint, followed a political playbook drafted by the architect of neoliberalism, Chicago School economist Milton Friedman.

British Columbians of all kinds rallied in opposition. They waged a 130-day campaign to force the provincial

government to rescind the entire legislative package. Huge rallies in Vancouver and Victoria, occupations of government offices and institutions like the Tranquille mental health facility in Kamloops (scheduled to be shuttered by the government), nightly meetings, and publication of a weekly newspaper, *Solidarity Times*, left no doubt as to the agitated state of the west coast.

Originally kicked off by the Lower Mainland Budget Coalition and a feminist contingent, Women Against the Budget, Solidarity owed its beginnings to the broad left, which included dissidents in the Vancouver and District Labour Council, some of whom were affiliated with the Communist Party. Soon, however, the movement came to be controlled by a powerful labour officialdom, ensconced in the upper echelons of the British Columbia Federation of Labour. Presiding over the BC Fed at the time was Art Kube, a moderate social democrat with a history in the red-baiting struggles of the Cold War that divided 1950s trade unions. Kube orchestrated the bifurcation of the opposition. Organized labour constituted Operation Solidarity, while the community groups and left activists were hived off in the Solidarity Coalition, whose material wherewithal came from the coffers of Kube's Federation. Ultimate decision-making was vested in a narrow layer of trade union tops whose concerns were always quite restricted, while, at the same time, a façade of wide-ranging public, social justice concerns was erected, behind which militants could be marshalled, if not entirely constrained.

A timetable was laid out, in which staggered strike action by unions loomed large. Many called for a General Strike; some thought it was in the offing. The labour officialdom managed to nurture this illusion while, behind closed

doors, scotching any possibility of a provincewide walkout.

Spaner considers Solidarity a revolution that he claims is unknown. It was never a revolution. Whether it really is unknown is open to discussion.

This is not to deny that it was a formidable moment. People, hundreds of thousands across the province, were marching and meeting, dancing, defending, and debating. Spaner captures well the exhilaration of the times. He does this by relying on oral recollections of individuals involved in the 1983 events. They convey the atmosphere of audacity, its festive collectivity of resistance. Interviews with these people range broadly over their lives, reaching back decades and situating personal development in the cauldron of conflict that was British Columbia in 1983. Interspersed with these narratives is what passes for an account of the Solidarity movement. Unfortunately, the actual flow of events and complex relations of the movement's dual components often come across in ways that are interrupted and obscured by anecdotal outlines of the lives of Spaner's informants, which routinely detail what they were doing decades before their involvement in Solidarity.

As history, Spaner's account is disappointing. The narrative is spotty and disjointed, although the writing can be fast-paced and at times quite readable. Documentary sources consulted are slight, especially given what has come to be deposited in various archives over the last decades. Decisive interpretive issues and an analysis explaining what happened is lacking. If Solidarity is now "unknown," Spaner himself does not help: he fails to confront what has been researched and written about British Columbia's boisterous extra-parliamentary opposition. This body of research, argument, and political

commentary – which includes a small book I wrote in the aftermath of the 1983 mobilization, *Solidarity: The Rise and Fall of an Opposition in British Columbia* (Vancouver: New Star, 1987) – is not insignificant. It raises many issues Spaner and his readers would benefit from confronting, and it often presents a picture at odds with his own. It is not incumbent upon him to agree with anything in this literature. It *is* necessary to engage with it.

Failing to do so means Spaner misses much of central importance. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Solidarity's brutally abrupt termination and its impact on the political culture of British Columbia. International Woodworkers of America union boss Jack Munro stood on Bill Bennett's Kelowna patio and, after a private discussion between the two men, announced the end of a months-long struggle. A battle dedicated to the eradication of an entire legislative package was scuttled for a few clauses in the collective bargaining agreements of the British Columbia Government Employees' Union, which gave trade unions a template for how to bargain themselves out of two key bills passed in the Sacred "restraint" package. It was a defeat for the left that hung over the province for years, perhaps decades. I recall graffiti in East Vancouver that, at the time, captured the feeling of despair that engulfed many swept up in Solidarity's promise: "Rise up, eat shit and die."

The book could have been an interesting play. Imagine a wizened journalist holding forth at his table, a glass never far from his hand. A parade of friends and others, with whom he linked arms during a tumultuous and formative time in his life, traipse through his kitchen. They reminisce about a struggle that once was, and needs to be refought, but is a long way from realization. As the

dialogue flows with drink, their makings as youths, concerts attended and causes embraced, parents who were radicals or reactionaries, books they were influenced by, sexual escapades, friends they grew up with, and how it all prepared them for the marching in the streets that animated the summer and fall of 1983, are bandied about. Conversations confront the past and how it structures our present. Why did things happen the way they did? As the consequences of consequences that are poorly understood through the shadows of decades done are recalled, people grapple with what led them to where they are but not to where they wanted to be. It would be intriguing theatre.

*Okanagan Women's Voices:
Sylx and Settler Writing and
Relations, 1870s–1960s*

Edited by Jeannette Armstrong,
Lally Grauer, and
Janet MacArthur

Penticton, BC: Theytus Books,
2021. 464 pp. \$34.95 paper.

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THE “TRUTH” of British Columbia’s history has yet to be fleshed out, with many active participants’ voices unaccounted for. This is particularly true regarding certain facts of Indigenous-settler relations that can be best understood through the insights, experiences, and words of the women who were there. Importantly, the perspectives of Indigenous women and their distinctive knowledges and positions need to be included within

what is understood as the history of British Columbia, as Canadian history at large, and in what is known as the Okanagan. The editors of *Okanagan Women's Voices: Sylx and Settler Writing and Relations 1870s–1960s* went to exhaustive lengths to fill gaps in scholarship and in the public sphere, centring the history of Sylx women’s lives, voices, writings, and relationalities and also, interestingly, highlighting kinship between Sylx and settler women, where their respective places overlapped during pivotal moments in British Columbia’s history.

The book spans the onset of the colonial project in the 1860s and 1870s, and maps changes that occurred (and what made those changes occur). Drawing on archives in which Sylx and settler women’s voices and perspectives are in dialogue, the editors, Sylx scholar Jeannette Armstrong and settler scholars Janet MacArthur and Lally Grauer, deploy their decades of expertise to deftly contextualize and make space for Sylx and settler women’s perspectives and voices, shining a light on the experience and nature of Sylx-settler relations during this period. The seven women writers in the book often comment on occasions when colonial officials (whom the writers met as children or adults or were related to), all men (given the time), visited their families’ homes, ranches, stores, and colonial offices.

We learn from these women’s perspectives how these men, familiar to anyone who has studied Canadian colonialism and the American wars against Indigenous tribes, drove the colonial project. They included land and gold commissioners J.C. Haynes, W.G. Cox, Joseph Trutch, G.M. Sproat; political and military figures like Governor James Douglas and the US general W.T. Sherman; and the famously eloquent Chief Joseph, leader of the

Nez Percé to the southeast of BC (who fought back against forced starvation and containment to reservations). *Okanagan Women's Voices* reveals how, in differing ways, these contacts created personal tensions in the lives of the women. Some were outspoken about their disappointments in the colonial actions of the time, while others wrestled internally with conflicting external social pressures, as evident in correspondence between Haynes's daughter, Hester White, and the Syilx writer, Matilda Kruger, who was a first cousin to the famous Syilx author Mourning Dove's father, Joseph Quintasket.

While they wrote from their respective "domestic" positions and locales in a heightened patriarchy, their parallel lives were intertwined in their concern with the well-being of neighbours, friends, and family. The Syilx writers, descended from esteemed, renowned Syilx leaders like Grand Chief Nkwala, Chief Francois, and Chief Tetlanista, quote mothers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers as keepers of Syilx family stories and histories. John Fall Allison's first wife, Nora Yacumtecum, stands out as a particularly savvy and regal Syilx figure of the time with her pack train venture (horses packing supplies and people, often in the hundreds, over the Hope-Princeton trail), and is worthy of a book unto herself. Her expertise and connections were pivotal. The non-Syilx writers, Susan Louisa Moir Allison, Hester Emily White, and Isabel Christie MacNaughton, quote or draw from stories told by Syilx friends and family. Some writings show a sharing of stories based on Syilx *captik*^{wł}, which hold multilayered histories and knowledge of ethics. Both Syilx and settler women show affectionate esteem for each other and for each other's work and knowledge.

Having spent childhood summers in the 1970s travelling from Vancouver with

my family to visit and ride horseback in the Penticton hills, and newly residing in Kelowna, *Okanagan Women's Voices* allowed me to learn the stories while literally travelling the pathways of the Syilx and settler writers, thereby deepening my connection to this place through time. As a Katzie Coast Salish person, I have, since the 1980s, been moved by Jeannette Armstrong's tenacity and resoluteness in transforming and indigenizing the academy while perpetuating Syilx People's worldview, language, histories, and ecosystem ethics and concepts. A novelist and poet, Armstrong was one of the first Indigenous women in Canada to be published. The first third of the book documents Syilx writers Josephine Shuttleworth, Eliza Jane Swalwell, Marie Houghton Brent, and Armstrong's relative Mourning Dove. In starting with the Syilx women's voices, respect is shown for Syilx People as the rightful hosts of the Okanagan and, as such, their voices begin the proceedings. Armstrong describes how these extraordinary women navigated their standings within, and between, two worlds as well as divides across land, culture, class, and colonialism: "Their lives, their voices, and their stories are gifts they have left to us" (1). The Syilx and settler women whose persons and writings are honoured in the book were interconnected through their writing, historical interests, and familial relations. These women grappled with complexity and harm amid the onslaught of new and changing colonial policies – the impacts of which reverberate in the Okanagan today.

*Wilson Duff:
Coming Back, a Life*

Robin Fisher

Madeira Park, BC: Harbour
Publishing, 2022. 360 pp.
\$39.95 paper.

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WILSON DUFF's life had enough pathos and controversy to inspire two fictional operas, a novel, and considerable gossip. It is about time for a factual biography. This thoroughly researched and well-written book is a must for anyone interested in Duff and in the history of anthropology, archaeology, museums, and totem pole preservation in the Pacific Northwest. Robin Fisher interviewed no fewer than sixty people and conducted extensive documentary research, including in the considerable papers of Duff himself, to offer the most detailed portrait that we can ever expect to obtain. It is a superb contribution.

Fisher's early chapters trace Duff's formative years from his birth in a working-class family in Vancouver in 1925 to the end of his role as a navigator in Second World War bombers. Those years are important for understanding Duff (and would be interesting to anyone interested in children and youth of that generation), but they predate Duff's interest in anthropology. It was in 1948, when Harry Hawthorn recruited him, that Duff turned to that discipline. When he graduated from UBC in 1949, Duff already anticipated his appointment as provincial anthropologist at the British Columbia Provincial Museum. Fisher explains the personal and intellectual

influences that brought him there. After completing an MA in 1950, Duff worked at the museum for fifteen years before joining the faculty at UBC in 1965. Those years are the subject of three chapters that explore and explain Duff's most controversial legacy.

Duff contributed to ethnology and archaeology, museum practice, totem pole preservation, and education (of the public and of university students). When most British Columbians were indifferent to Indigenous art, and when some journalists disparaged totem poles as hideous monstrosities, Duff negotiated the removal and preservation of the poles with the consent (and sometimes at the request) of Indigenous communities.

Having attended some of Fisher's talks about Duff, I doubt that this book will end all controversy. It should, however, dispel myths that remorse over his role in the removal of totem poles drove Duff to suicide in 1976. By 1976, Duff thought the time for removing totem poles had passed, but he believed that it was right to do so when and how he did (with the support of the Indigenous people who owned the poles). Fisher also cogently defends the more important argument that Duff's respectful efforts to preserve totem poles and other artefacts were instrumental in defending Indigenous claims, ensuring that Indigenous art flourished, and bridging the gulf of understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous British Columbians.

There is little doubt that, although shy and nervous, Duff profoundly influenced thousands of students who crowded into his UBC courses and the many who attended the Indigenous art exhibits he helped plan and promote. Fisher also explores that legacy. He also shows that Duff was early among academics to have his students ponder the ethics of removing artefacts from Indigenous communities.

Duff had tragic flaws. Convinced that his parents had rejected him, guilt-ridden over his inadequacies as husband and father, insecure about his standing as academic and educator, Duff succumbed slowly to his “own neurotic personality” (Duff’s words) (298). Depression, anxiety, and guilt, coupled with a belief in reincarnation, eventually led him to suicide. Fisher sensitively takes the reader through Duff’s tortured later days.

Much has been said and written about Wilson Duff, and Fisher’s is unlikely to be the last word. However, Robin Fisher has put the life and work of Wilson Duff in its historical context in a way that is unlikely ever to be surpassed.

*So You Girls Remember That:
Memories of a Haida Elder*
Gaadgas Nora Bellis

Madeira Park, BC: Harbour
Publishing, 2022. 240 pp.
\$22.95 paper.

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*Every morning when I build the
fire and when it start to go, if it’s
scattered over, you have to poke it
and put it together and it start to
go. That’s the way life is. We have
to be together.* (Gaadgas, 181)

SOMETIMES, one encounters a book that is, uniquely, so dense with relations that this scaffolding comes to represent it for a reviewer. *So You Girls Remember That* is such a work. It is a life narrative bundled in a social project that began in 1992, when Gaadgas Nora Bellis told her friends and family that she wanted to “record her memories”

(xiii). The setting is Haida Gwaii. These reminiscences told in the 1990s reach back through three or four generations of oral memory, through the mythological past-present of Haida traditions and into the imagined futures so often visible in life stories. The people who initially caught Gaadgas’s stories include her late son Charlie Bellis; her friend, Maureen McNamara (also deceased); and the current editor/author Jenny Nelson. The book’s acknowledgments also reveal a small universe of contributors, a hybrid coalition of experienced knowledge holders (including relatives, language experts, scholars of various kinds). They listened, recorded, transcribed, and translated. They (generously) contextualized customary knowledge or cultural meanings that may not be apparent to all readers. They worked from Xaad Kil to English on renditions of story cycles and a broad range of cultural and historical accounts. Not only are these collaborators referenced but their *voices* are also included as they contribute to topics raised by Gaadgas. I appreciate these voices and archival additions that make the process of textualizing oral accounts transparent.

Life history work involves a process that is intensely collaborative. In every act of speaking, tellers and listeners are entangled in various kinds of relations. There are social dynamics among storyteller(s), listener(s) and characters; other storytellers who have relationship to the story; and other listeners who have a relationship with what is being brought into being. These relationships have everything to do with the knowledge that is produced through storytelling, so much so that many suggest that life stories are themselves multi-vocal. For those who enter into this generative process, the greatest puzzle is how to shepherd a story, a life narrative, to wider

audiences. Moving from speech to text, Jenny Nelson's choices adhere closely to listening practices. Nora Bellis's speech is not altered for English grammar conventions: it retains the spoken inflections of a bi- or trilingual speaker. The text is often arranged in the style of ethno-poetics that evokes a certain rhythm. Inevitably, textualizing verbal materials requires other editing decisions too. Nelson organized narratives into a chronology and, here and there, a traditional narrative was compiled from several, separate tellings. One hundred and thirty-five footnotes take readers into worlds that open up, from a phrase, name, game, symbol, or song, particular tricksters and ancestors. Numerous photographs (that could be larger) introduce readers to the sites and people who are key to Nora's narratives: villages, canneries, houses, totem poles, boats, families, school groups, and jam sessions. While the primary text is the close-to-verbatim narratives of Gaadgas, this work also connects with relevant literatures, colonial archives, anthropological ethnographies, and linguistic scholarship; with biographical details about those who figure into Nora Bellis's tellings. Her place in the Haida social world is narrated genealogically, through her mother Gudaa xiigans, Susan Bennett, and then her father, Duuan 'iljuus, Captain Andrew Brown; their clan histories, villages, and accomplishments. Stories Gaadgas shares reflect the wealth of Haida knowledge practices as she draws on cultural imagery and expressive conventions. Near the

middle of the book, a set of narratives are skilfully woven around a bear song that originates from a story at the Yakoun River. Gaadgas describes how "it carries [her] all over the place," that she "travels with it" (69). It connects her to her father and to those to whom she passed it, to the Skidegate dialect and performance traditions, to the gendered realm of supernatural activity.

Nora Bellis (1902–1997) was an active interpreter of her own life transitions. Readers are privileged, I think, to witness the arc of her life as she describes both daily events and periods of extraordinary change. Like many Indigenous narrators, Gaadgas's stories intersect with experiences of Indian Act prohibitions and colonial violence, but they are punctuated throughout with the vitality of Haida knowledge and teachings – about technologies and economies and the vast network of relationships and practices that inhabit the deeply storied land- and marinescapes. Climate change, recipes, carving, ship building, logging, canning, gardening, medicine, jokes, music, existential teachings – all have a part in the rich imagery that Nora Bellis chose to share. There is nothing rigid in her accounts: they convey the lifeworld of a charismatic Haida storyteller, musician, and philosopher. I am left with a sense of the integrity of relations that contributed to this obvious labour of love, friendship, and community. This spirit continues as book royalties are donated to the Carl Hart Legacy Trust to support the T'aalan St'ang Rediscovery Wilderness Youth Camp.