

BOOK REVIEWS

***Royally Wronged:
The Royal Society of Canada
and Indigenous Peoples***

Constance Backhouse, Cynthia
E. Milton, Margaret Kovach,
and Adele Perry, editors

Montreal and Kingston: McGill-
Queen's University Press, 2021.
365 pp. \$39.95 paper.

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Royally Wronged carries a heavy burden. It is intended as part of the Royal Society of Canada's "reckoning" with its own complicity in colonialism. It is intentionally organized as a response to Dr. Cindy Blackstock's 2015 correspondence that urged the RSC to live up to the spirit of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action (12–16). *Royally Wronged*, its editors note, is a "first step" in what promises to be a wider and more diverse process (5). "This volume," its introduction explains, "emerged from an open call for papers that the [RSC's] Task Force [on Truth and Reconciliation, established in the wake of Dr. Blackstock's communication,]

issued to all members." The call "requested papers that would explore the historical contributions of the RSC and of Canadian scholars to the production of ideas and policies that underpin the disastrous interaction of settlers, especially white ones, with Indigenous peoples" (5–6). The result is a collection of twelve chapters complemented by a "Foreword" written by Blackstock, an editorial introduction crafted by Constance Backhouse and Cynthia E. Milton that reproduces Blackstock's original letter, a multi-authored memo urging the decolonization of the Academy, a conversational interview with Shain Jackson (whose artwork graces the collection's cover), and an editorial afterword that draws together the collection's different themes. Along with its scholarly apparatus, the collection runs to more than 365 pages. It is evident that a great deal of time, care, and commitment have been put into it.

With all of this in mind, *Royally Wronged* is a remarkably difficult text to review. What one thinks of it will depend on how one reads it and the ideas and perspectives that frame their reading. Its chapters address a broad range of issues, from the institutional history of the RSC to the work of its members

(particularly but not exclusively Duncan Campbell Scott), to colonial narratives embedded in Maritime avocational historical writing, to innovative legal and graduate education designed to address colonialism's cognitive imperialism, among others. In short, there is a lot in this collection that is intended to capture the diverse ways in which Westernized knowledge systems constitute a cornerstone of Canadian colonialism as well as suggestive chapters that try to sketch directions for responses. On this level, one can express nothing but admiration for this collection, respect for its commitments, and support for its objectives. I am grateful *Royally Wronged* has been published.

I also found it disappointing. Don't hear what I am not saying: I am not opposed to the critical interrogation of colonialism. In fact, the opposite. I have been thinking about the reasons for my disappointment and it might be that this text is directed to a different audience. For instance, it might be directed to students or a general readership or the RSC itself. If so, that is the way it is and is not cause for lament. But, for the record, what is disappointing about *Royally Wronged* is that it does not tell me anything I do not already know or would not strongly suspect. At times the collection becomes repetitive as the same ideas and same facts (relating to RSC history) are repeated in different chapters. At other times, authors provide lists of RSC publications and fellows that address Indigenous issues but do not really explore those publications and what they tell us about the connections between colonialism and Canadian intellectual life. I am surprised that little time is given at the beginning of the collection to defining colonialism and its various manifestations. And I am surprised by what authors think are discoveries of importance. I don't mean to single out any individual author

because that would be unfair, but Jane Bailey's otherwise stellar chapter, "Confronting 'Cognitive Imperialism': What Reconstituting a Contracts Law School Course Is Teaching Me about Law," is a case in point. I want to give Bailey her due. This chapter provides an important and challenging conception of colonialism that pays due respect to the work of Indigenous scholars. I strongly recommend it. But I am also surprised by an analytic confession. Before exploring colonialism, Bailey writes, they "had assumed ... that law could be relatively clearly distinguished from social norms because law was anything that ultimately the state had the power to enforce against me – something that happened mostly in or in the shadow of ... courtrooms." Further: "I never really stopped to consider the very definition of law by which I abided played a fundamental role in [colonialism]" (236–37).

Bailey is a professor of law at the University of Ottawa and so I found myself asking: Why would one make those assumptions? I am not a lawyer, and I would not make them. In fact, I'd begin from the exact opposite assumptions, and not because I have any special insight into the operation of the law. Critical studies of the law that show close connections to social norms, that feature ongoing controversies and social conflicts enacted in the courtroom, and that explore the ways in which legal processes (indeed, the very definition of law itself) are bound to colonialism, racialized public life, marginalization, and inequality are not new. There is not space here to get into the details, but these ideas are foundational to studies of colonialism, dispossession, treaty rights, the law against the potlatch, legalized Indigenous identities, and a host of other matters. I was left wondering: What does it mean that Canadian legal education appears to have

ignored conclusions embedded in critical scholarship stretching back a generation?

Finally, one tricky but important matter. I recognize that the editors and authors were producing this collection as this story evolved, but Carrie Bourassa – identified as part of a “cohort” of emerging Indigenous scholars connected to the RSC (308) – is not Indigenous. The final report for the University of Saskatchewan was released after *Royally Wronged* had gone to press and the timeline on addressing Bourassa’s situation might have been just too tight to address in text. Still, what we end up with is a text the replicates potential settler appropriation of Indigenous identity, and this issue should have been addressed in some way. At the least, it should be acknowledged on McGill-Queen’s UP’s web page for the text or with some sort of brief note included with the book as it shipped. This might have been difficult, but would it have been too much to ask of a collection that is looking to contribute to decolonization?

Let me reiterate my gratitude to *Royally Wronged*’s editors and authors before ending on one further critical note. I am glad this collection has been published. The critical note is this: *Royally Wronged* implicitly raises a fundamental question that could be addressed head on: Can we graft decolonization onto colonial institutions? I don’t know, and I’ll defer to others who know more than I do. The argument this text seems to implicitly make is “yes,” and an assessment of the complexity of this issue might be next on the RSC’s agenda. I don’t know, but I hope it is.

*St. Michael’s Residential School:
Lament and Legacy*

Nancy Dyson and
Dan Rubenstein

Vancouver: Ronsdale Press, 2021.

220 pp. \$21.95 paper.

Crystal Gail Fraser

University of Alberta

ACCORDING TO authors Nancy Dyson and Dan Rubenstein, they were encouraged to share their story of working at the Alert Bay Student Residence (formerly St. Michael’s Indian Residential School) by Chief Robert Joseph of Reconciliation Canada: “You must tell your story. Tell what you witnessed so no one can deny what happened. This is so important to the survivors” (174). The authors worked at this institution in Alert Bay, British Columbia, for four months, and their story reflects their lives during that time. When reading their narrative, it is important to note that it consists of their “recollections; the dialogue, based on memory, is not a word-for-word account but captures the essence of conversations we had at the time” (xi). Readers must keep this front of mind.

Their story of arriving in Alert Bay in 1970 is presented first by Dyson, who chronicles joining a system of child incarceration as young adults – childcare workers – while seemingly ignoring warnings from others (xi–164). Throughout, she highlights how little she and Rubenstein, both US expats, knew about the Indian Residential School system in Canada. She expresses concern and surprise at the coercive intake measures of stripping children naked for delousing and cleaning, at the poor quality of food given to Indigenous

children, at the violent punishments that were inflicted on students, and at the federal government of Canada for being a key architect of this genocidal system, with Christian churches at their side. Dyson also provides glimpses of Hailzaqv culture, writing about the raising of a totem pole and potlatch celebrations, noting that “the people looked proud; the children looked proud” (51). This is juxtaposed by the carceral and violent environment of St. Michael’s Indian Residential School (locals continued to use its former name) and discussion of how students and their parents responded to it, including a young boy who attempted to take his own life (104) and a parent who removed his daughters from the institution during an unauthorized nighttime visit (117).

It is not until the final pages that Rubenstein makes his offering. Rather than providing memoir-style narrative, he grapples with the present-day context of Truth and Reconciliation. Rubenstein admits that he “rarely” (167) thought about the local Indigenous children after his four months at the Alert Bay Student Residence and affirms that his contemporary wonderings and questions about the system were a result of the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC).

There are troubling aspects to the narrative, including the fact that Rubenstein prioritized his desire to obtain landed immigrant papers (114) over intervening for the safety of children. Dyson writes with more passion and consideration towards her newly adopted puppy (87–90) than she does towards helping Indigenous girls who were coerced into local prostitution to meet basic needs (105). Finally, Rubenstein lists one of his three “unresolved” questions as: “Were there any voices of protest, voices of dissent, when the residential schools were in operation?” (176). On

many occasions, according to Dyson, she and Rubenstein encountered locals who spoke out and provided warnings about St. Michael’s Indian Residential School, including visits with former students of the residential school who still lived in Alert Bay (73–80). This oversight calls the credibility of Dyson’s narrative into question.

The authors close many chapters with excerpts from the TRC’s Final Report. I appreciate that Dyson and Rubenstein have included the words of the TRC, which highlight not only the ongoing importance of that work but also the need for more Canadians to read it. I had also hoped, though, that the voices of local Hailzaqv Elders and Survivors would have been highlighted in a robust way.

There are not many books of this style: Canadians have not heard about the experiences of the administrators, missionaries, teachers, Indian agents, policing staff, and others who were responsible for forcibly removing Indigenous children from their families and lands, imposing harmful policies, and running the institutions themselves. There is a need for this work to be conducted in a way that is ethical, community-engaged, and that centres the voices of Indian Residential School Survivors and intergenerational Survivors. In this regard, this book leaves much to be desired.

***The Geography of Memory:
Reclaiming the Cultural,
Natural, and Spiritual History
of the Snayackstx (Sinixt)
First People***

Eileen Delehanty Pearkes

Victoria, BC: Rocky Mountain
Books, 2022. 280 pp. \$30.00 paper.

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THE SINIXT are an oft-forgotten Indigenous people in BC history. For thousands of years, they lived along the upper Columbia River and its tributaries – a transboundary region of eastern British Columbia and Washington State. Although the vast majority of Sinixt territories lie north of the border, the majority of Sinixt people now live in the United States, where they are recognized as the Arrow Lakes Indians of the Colville Confederated Tribes. In 1956, the Canadian government declared the Sinixt extinct, aiming to extinguish their rights and Title in British Columbia. However, the Sinixt have fought to reassert these connections, and this has culminated in a 2021 Supreme Court of Canada ruling that they remain an Aboriginal people of Canada.

Eileen Delehanty Pearkes seeks to address this neglected story in *The Geography of Memory: Reclaiming the Cultural, Natural and Spiritual History of the Snayackstx (Sinixt) First People*. The text is presented as a new edition of a book originally published two decades ago by Kutenai House Press as *The Geography of Memory: Recovering Stories of a Landscape's First People*. However, the first edition was a compact tract that

totalled a mere ninety-five pages; the new edition is substantially expanded, triple the length of the original, including important new information on how Sinixt people are reclaiming connections to their transboundary territories. Thus, Pearkes's new edition is better understood as a sequel than as simply a revision.

The book is not structured as a historical narrative but, rather, as a kind of travelogue. It details Pearkes's encounters with places of historical and contemporary significance to the Sinixt, including those along the Arrow Lakes, from Rossland to Kettle Falls, around Slocan Lake, and down the west Kootenay River, as well as in the lands of the Colville Confederated Tribes in Washington State. Pearkes mixes narratives of her personal travels with information from archaeological and ethnobotanical records, historical anecdotes, and contemporary stories of Sinixt people reconnecting with their territories.

Pearkes provides the greatest depth in her review of the ethnographic and archaeological record related to the Sinixt. She effectively draws upon the information collected by James Teit in the early twentieth century and William Eldendorf's field notes of his interactions with Sinixt Elder Nancy Wynecoop in the 1930s. She also draws on the ethnobotanical research of Nancy Turner, Randy Bouchard, and Dorothy Kennedy. Reviewing this research, Pearkes particularly stresses the importance of women's traditional knowledge and activities.

Pearkes's approach to history is somewhat fragmentary and anecdotal, retelling events in accordance with the places she encounters in her travels rather than in accordance with a more conventional chronology. She recounts stories, such as the murder of Cultus Jim, to highlight the devastating

impacts of settlement on the Sinixt and the indifference of settler colonial authorities to violence against Indigenous people. Pearkes also details how settler colonial states have fragmented Sinixt geographies. The imposition of the Canada-US border restricted Sinixt movement across their traditional territories, eventually leading to the Canadian government's declaration that the Sinixt were extinct north of the 49th parallel. Through the middle decades of the twentieth century, Sinixt waterways on both sides of the border were further transformed as massive hydroelectric dams flooded old Sinixt village sites and devastated salmon fisheries throughout the Columbia River Basin.

At times, Pearkes's emphasis on the historical ruptures of colonialism has the effect of situating Sinixt connections to the land in the past. A repeatedly invoked image is that of the Sinixt as haunting the landscape. For instance, after retelling how the family of Baptiste Christian was forced off the land by Doukhobor settlers, Pearkes describes family members as a ghostly presence inhabiting the Kootenay River. She writes, "I see a tragically displaced family and a nearly forgotten culture in the hard, dancing shards of light reflecting off the free-moving river" (74).

However, the book also emphasizes that Sinixt people are actively reanimating their connections to the upper Columbia River. One of the strongest elements of the new edition is the inclusion of contemporary Sinixt voices, including Laurie Arnold, Ladonna Boyd-Bluff, Shawn Brigman, Larae Wiley, and Judge Wynecoop. They share stories of Indigenous cultural and political revitalization, both describing the restoration of traditional practices and contemporary political movements to expand Sinixt rights and the resource

governance authority of the Colville Confederated Tribes.

Ultimately, Pearkes calls upon readers to expand their thinking about the meaning of settler-Indigenous reconciliation. As the story of the Sinixt highlights, historic processes have displaced Indigenous peoples across international borders. But the territorial boundaries of the settler state cannot set the limits of decolonization. Contemporary Sinixt activists demonstrate that reconnecting to the land requires acting beyond the political and legal geographies of settler society.

The Politics of the Canoe

Ed. Bruce Erickson and
Sarah Wylie Krotz

Winnipeg, MB: University of
Manitoba Press, 2021. 272 pp. \$27.95
paper.

LEIGH POTVIN
Lakehead University

I WILL ADMIT to having felt some skepticism when I agreed to review *Politics of the Canoe*, an academic volume edited by Bruce Erickson and Sarah Wylie Krotz. Too often the words "canoe" and "politics" conjure images of mostly white, mostly male, sometimes well-meaning social justice types whose good intentions are, well, good, but fall short of addressing the problematic, colonial roots of outdoor recreation. This imagery and the worldview that goes with it, which I feared would dominate the text, is in fact explicitly addressed and taken down throughout the contributed chapters. And, as editors, Erickson and Krotz made many choices that helped to assuage

my doubts: the cover art is a beautifully photographed sheet of birch bark, and the title, while at first glance vague, becomes an invitation and, I hope, results in some readers picking up the book who otherwise would not.

Divided into three sections – “Asserting Indigenous Sovereignty”; “Building Canoes, Knowledge, and Relationships”; and “Telling Histories” – the book starts with an introduction from the editors that is anchored in Leanne Betasameke Simpson’s short film *How to Steal a Canoe*. This film and the accompanying framing of the canoe as a contested political site in the Canadian colonial context firmly anchor the subsequent chapters. A wonderful feature that reinforces the editors’ intent to tie the chapters to the land is the use of maps at the start of each chapter. Using these maps to situate the reader is a great place to “put in” to these chapters. *Politics of the Canoe* highlights the canoe as a site of cultural and linguistic resurgence for Indigenous communities and nods to the ways in which settler communities complicated, obfuscated, and, in some cases, outlawed these cultural practices.

It’s difficult to summarize an academic text with multiple contributors and so I will highlight a few chapters that have stuck with me. I particularly enjoyed the chapter by Cushman et al., which speaks to the role of canoes in cultural revitalization in the Pacific Northwest. I was struck, as a parent who has recently given birth, by Cushman’s anecdote of completing a six-mile paddle while in labour. She relays her comfort in travelling her ancestors’ canoe routes while preparing to become a parent herself. Ling Chapman’s offering outlines the complicated history and implications of the Tappan Adney archives of model canoes and other Indigenous technologies. Chapman argues that, while tied to a colonial whitewashing

and exoticizing of Wolastoqiyik peoples, Adney – a settler “adventurer” type – inadvertently made highly accurate and detailed representations of Indigenous canoe-building practices that can now be used for language and cultural revitalization. Such a tale highlights the messy entanglement that is colonization. Gendron’s chapter on her journey to revisit a canoe route traversed by her ancestors is a meaningful and critical contribution to scholarship seeking to understand the ways in which settlers view canoeing through the “prism of colonization.” Repurposing Peggy McIntosh’s metaphor of the white privilege knapsack, Gendron analyzes and assesses how she packed her canoe for her trip and the inextricable links to class and colonization.

Ultimately, I think the very thing that caused my skepticism is also the reason I think this book is poised to create positive ripples among its readers. It does not present itself as a radical re-envisioning of the canoe as a recreational vehicle and yet, in many ways, it does. It simultaneously appeals to lovers of the canoe and challenges them to examine their assumptions about canoeing as an activity that happens somewhere out there, in “nature,” which many of the contributors remind us is a Euro-colonial construct. *Politics of the Canoe* is an invitation to learn, and I suggest the editors have accomplished a difficult task: speaking to the non-converted, creating critical conversations, and promoting deeper learning about the canoe and the ways it is tied to our colonial histories.

*Our Backs Warmed by the Sun:
Memories of a Doukhobor Life*

Vera Maloff

Halfmoon Bay, BC: Caitlin Press,
2020. 263 pp. \$24.95 paper.

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IN *Our Backs Warmed by the Sun: Memories of a Doukhobor Life*, Vera Maloff recounts the lives of several generations of the Maloff-Hoodicoff family who, for much of the previous century, farmed in Thrums, a community along the Kootenay River near Castlegar, British Columbia. Maloff relies primarily on the memories of her mother, Elizabeth (Leeza) Maloff, those of other members of her family, and on her own documentary research to tell the story of a Doukhobor family, from the migration of the great-grandparents from Russia to Canada in the 1890s to the lives of their descendants in the present. Maloff shows how important the women of the family, including her grandmothers, mother, and aunts, were to maintaining a family dedicated to the Doukhobor spiritual vision of a simple life of toil on the land and a commitment to peace. In *Our Backs Warmed by the Sun*, we learn about the negative impact of the federal government's opposition to peace activism on all the members of an individual Doukhobor family.

From the late 1920s to the end of the Second World War, for years at a time the state imprisoned Maloff's grandfather, Peter Maloff, for his participation in Doukhobor demonstrations against government policies that promoted militarism and for his refusal to register for wartime service under the 1940 National Resources Mobilization Act.

Maloff points out that, while he was in prison and in exile, it was not only her grandfather who suffered but also his wife Lucy (Lusha) Maloff and their six children. They suffered from the long absences of their husband and father, and from being interned in an abandoned logging camp by the federal government after they camped for three weeks in Nelson to protest Maloff's initial arrest. In the early 1930s, the children suffered again when the federal government imprisoned their mother on Piers Island for her participation in Doukhobor demonstrations. With both parents in prison, officials apprehended the Maloffs' children, separated them, and sent them to the BC Girls' Industrial School, to the Alexandra Orphanage, and to foster homes in the Lower Mainland. Of this suffering, Vera Maloff comments: "I have seen the toll on the family through the generations, a tension and anxiety we have all carried from childhood" (64).

Our Backs Warmed by the Sun includes a moving description of Doukhobor life in the West Kootenay from the late 1940s to the 1970s. Released by the federal government at the end of the war, Peter Maloff long remained an Independent Doukhobor. He rejected the tactics of the Sons of Freedom Doukhobors and, for a long period, the hierarchical structure of the Community Doukhobors. Unable to find work due to the broader community's negative perception of Maloff's "radical" past, Peter and Lusha supported their family through market garden production on their two-hectare homestead. Beginning each spring, the family sold bedding plants, produce, and flowers in the parking lots of supermarkets and at weekly markets in Trail and Nelson. This family economy, which relied on the labour of all its members, allowed the Maloffs to follow a Doukhobor life on the land. For the Maloffs, Doukhobor principles included

public speaking and writing in support of peace, vegetarianism, and what, today, we would call organic farming and alternative health and healing practices. The Doukhobor belief in a common humanity also meant that the Maloff home was open to exiles from Russia, followers of alternative health practices from California, and, in the 1960s, US war resisters. Through all this, Vera Maloff makes clear that her mother and grandmother made sacrifices to support the family. Asked about these sacrifices, Maloff's mother, Leeza, concluded: "Well, life could have been easier!" (250).

Our Backs Warmed by the Sun is a well-written and well-illustrated work about Doukhobor life in the West Kootenay during the twentieth century. It speaks again to how difficult it has been to be a Doukhobor in British Columbia. It emphasizes the peoples' commitment to their beliefs and their resistance in the face of government hostility. Finally, it points to the many relevant and appealing aspects of Doukhobor lifeways.

***When Trains Ruled the
Kootenays: A Short History
of Railways in Southeastern
British Columbia***

Terry Gainer

Victoria, BC: Rocky Mountain
Books, 2022. 240 pp. \$25.00 paper.

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Selkirk College

DRIVEN IN PART by what the author claims has been "a lifelong love affair with trains," this book seeks to fill a gap in the history of rail development in the Kootenay region by adding the perspective of the people involved to the historical record. In doing so, Terry

Gainer has certainly made a valuable contribution to the existing historical literature on this topic. *When Trains Ruled the Kootenays* is written in a lively and accessible style that will appeal to a wide variety of readers. Further, the inclusion of dozens of interesting and relevant images adds a welcome visual element to the work.

Local history enthusiasts and students will appreciate Gainer's keen understanding of the historical importance of railway construction beyond the early years – for instance, his discussion of the highly influential Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) purchase of the Columbia and Western charter from Augustus Heinze, which resulted in not only further CPR control of transportation in the region but also gave the company ownership over the Trail smelter, positioning it for economic dominance in the region well beyond the golden age of the railways. By adding such rich detail to the existing historical record of rail development, Gainer has written a book that is a valuable addition to local history. Through increasing our understanding of this part of the history of the West Kootenay, he has also very effectively illustrated just how much things have changed over the past century, and he makes some important statements about what we might learn from the past with passages like: "One hundred years ago, you could travel on scheduled service from any point in the Kootenays to another. While today's highways do access most communities, try doing it without a car. Public transportation today is virtually nonexistent." For many reasons, *When Trains Ruled the Kootenays* is a must read for anyone interested in the history of railways and the West Kootenay region.

One potential criticism of the book can be tied to the author's own words. Gainer mentions the 2010 restoration of

the historic CPR train station in Nelson: “the restoration, while an outstanding accomplishment, offers scant information chronicling the principal role the station had played in the community and even less evidence regarding the sophisticated passenger train and steamboat connections that once served all of the Kootenays” (55). While this book certainly fills the gap in knowledge regarding transportation connections and their importance, more is needed on the “community” element he mentions. In the end, the book is an enjoyable read and

a valuable contribution to the existing body of work on railway development in the Kootenays, but it leaves more work to be done. It has effectively outlined the complex development of railways in the region and the major players involved, but it is to be hoped that others will continue to dig deeper for an increased exploration of the communities who relied on these railways and, perhaps even more important, of those who rode the rails and what their experiences might have been.