

BOOK REVIEWS

Becoming Vancouver: A History

Daniel Francis

Madeira Park, BC: Harbour
Publishing, 2021. 272 pp.
\$36.95 paper.

JOHN BELEC

University of the Fraser Valley

DANIEL FRANCIS is an accomplished Vancouver-based author of books written in the genre of popular history. In Canada, the patron saint of such work is Pierre Berton. Thus, it is fitting that Francis was awarded the Governor General's Award for Popular Media, a.k.a. the Pierre Berton Award, in 2017. His oeuvre is vast and much of it informs the writing of *Becoming Vancouver: A History*. This includes earlier books on the sex trade, prohibition, the Red Scare of 1918–19, and a biography of Louis Taylor, Vancouver's longest-serving mayor. Francis has also produced two books that interrogate facets of settler-Indigenous relations in Canada.

In *Becoming Vancouver*, Daniel Francis has written the definitive story of Vancouver.

Were this story to become a scripted Netflix series, the lead would be played by a dashing character who struggles

with dissociative personality disorder. The affliction would appear early in childhood and would manifest itself in contradictory impulses. "One impulse wants to protect its location in order to build an affordable, green, 'livable' city. Another wants to leverage its location to make the city every more attractive to the forces of global capitalism" (3). This split personality also functions as a persistent fault line, according to Francis, and is a central theme in his book.

Becoming Vancouver is organized chronologically and is character driven. Fortunately for the author, Vancouver offers an abundant supply of characters from which to draw, some with familiar names, such as Gassy Jack, Cornelius Van Horne, Joe Fortes, Gerry McGeer, Tom Campbell, and Arthur Erickson. However, most of the cast will likely be new to the reader. Francis begins the book with August Jack Khahtsahlano, who was born in 1877 in the village of Seríákw, located at the mouth of False Creek. The forced relocation of Khahtsahlano to the Capilano Reserve in North Vancouver establishes a context – Vancouver is built on stolen land: "mainstream Vancouver ... removed the Indigenous people who originally lived within the city's borders and pretty much erased them from its memory" (223).

The book is organized into eight chapters with each covering approximately twenty years of history, beginning with the arrival of Vancouver Island Spar, Lumber and Saw Mill Company in Burrard Inlet in 1865 and ending with COVID-19 in 2020. Each chapter is characterized with a theme that helps to contextualize the numerous places, names, dates, and events. Historic photographs are also plentiful and work well to supplement the text.

A shortcoming is a lack of reference maps. With the exception of a small-scale map of Vancouver circa 1886 that identifies early neighbourhoods and land holdings, the reader has little to help with locating geographical references – chiefly roads – that are used extensively in the book. For nonresidents this results in a certain disconnect with the subject matter. The solution, of course, is to keep a city map (paper or digital) handy. Even better would be to supplement *Becoming Vancouver* with a historical atlas of Vancouver. Hayes (2005) and Macdonald (1992) would serve well in this regard.

Ultimately, *Becoming Vancouver* tells a compelling story that draws on a wealth of archival, academic, and popular resource material. As a deep dive into the psyche of the city, it could just as well be titled “Understanding Vancouver.”

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Macdonald, Bruce. 1992. *Vancouver: A Visual History*. Vancouver: Talon Books.

Neighbourhood Houses: Building Community in Vancouver

Miu Chung Yan and
Sean Lauer, editors

Vancouver: UBC Press, 2021.
296 pp. \$32.95 paper.

PAMELA SHAW
Vancouver Island University

THE TEXT BEGINS with the question: “What would it be like to live in a welcoming society?” (5). Indeed, this question is all the more relevant given societal upheavals relating to the pandemic, actions towards reconciliation, and wider movements that address justice, equity, inclusion, and diversity. The editors address the question of a “welcoming society” through seven chapters and a detailed foreword authored by themselves along with six additional contributors: the overall goal is to provide a detailed understanding of the neighbourhood house model in Vancouver and to deconstruct the impact of these houses on creating community within specific neighbourhoods. The use of multiple authors adds to the authenticity of the work and creates a readable, interesting case study that could certainly be applied to other municipalities in British Columbia and beyond. This text would be of interest to community advocates, social justice proponents, elected officials, and urbanists interested in finding ways to create positive connections at a neighbourhood level.

The social history of urbanization is well researched, as is the evolution of Vancouver’s neighbourhood houses. As the text unfolds, the paradox of feeling isolated while surrounded by others is discussed, as are questions of social cohesion, the relevance of

place (and placelessness), and the importance of a sense of inside-ness to humans. Each chapter expands on a different issue: social reformation, the influence of American settlement houses on the Vancouver case study, government interventions, top-down versus bottom-up programming and management, advocacy, and the notion of individual and collective aspirations for navigating one's own path as a newcomer to a place. The stories of individuals who benefitted from their involvement with neighbourhood houses are told in their own words: this chapter adds authenticity and depth to the text. Chapter 7 delves into an analysis of the major challenges facing neighbourhood houses and concludes that, while problems exist, neighbourhood houses have served as a physical solution to addressing a range of issues for urban dwellers.

One potential issue with the book is that some of the research was conducted several years ago: the text discusses the results of data collection through a survey and other activities that took place from 2012 to 2014. However, the findings are clearly presented and are not extrapolated beyond what they can actually reveal. It would be interesting to recreate the research in a current context, given evolving issues surrounding reconciliation, social isolation, the spotlight on systemic inequities and injustices, growing individualism, and widening societal fractures. Perhaps a second edition could provide these updates.

As noted by John David Hulchanski in the introductory pages of the text, "The work of community building is not easy" (xiii). However, neighbourhood houses have made positive impacts on place-based community building by providing services, creating a sense of belonging, and serving as a physical/visual reminder that we can successfully

join together for social, civic, educational, or developmental purposes. The neighbourhood houses reviewed in this text could certainly serve as a model for other municipalities searching for new (albeit historic) means of creating connections among residents.

All the Bears Sing: Stories

Macy Harold

Madeira Park, BC: Harbour
Publishing, 2022. 256 pp.
\$24.95 paper.

SHIRLEY McDONALD

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Okanagan*

All the Bears Sing is the third collection of stories by Harold Macy and reflects his maturity and experience as a writer. As his biographical information states, Macy was a silviculturist (among his several other jobs in British Columbia's forest industry). His stories, with their vernacular and tangible imagery, offer evidence of his work history. While some of Macy's stories are like poetic vignettes about the natural world, offering phrases like "the earth lay hollow in its thirst" (11), many narratives are about labour, a theme common to the poems of Tom Wayman and to Gary Geddes's "Falsework," a poem about the collapse of Vancouver's Second Narrows Bridge in 1958. And, like Geddes's "Falsework," which John Gilmore praises for its vivid, visceral, and even "primal" images – images that "hook right into those gut-wrenching sensations: falling, entrapment, drowning, suffocation" (book cover) – Macy's narratives are spiked with tension. Their startling

grotesque elements and surprise endings elicit out-loud responses. One example is “Into the Silverthrone Caldera,” a narrative about logging on a steep mountain slope. The first few stories appear to be based on Macy’s life experiences, but the collection is not entirely autobiographical. That expectation is shattered when we realize that the next few are narrated by a young girl living in a northern rural community, by a mother and wife, and by a grandmother, respectively, and we realize that many of these stories are pure fiction. Some are sad, some end with relief or happiness; however, all of them offer profound insights into common personal experiences and plights. With wit and wisdom, Macy alludes to cultural transformations and periods and to social problems, and, while he is at times a bit didactic, he reflects on human foibles without cynicism or derision; rather, he writes with compassion about the misfits, outcasts, and recluses who live in logging and mining towns. In “Delta Charlie,” he shows understanding for the less-than-fortunate who “live on abandoned road allowances, bush camps and common lands throughout the province – victims of a collapsing primary economy poorly replaced by McJobs and seasonal service or retail work” (70). While we may have heard about such people, Macy’s stories help us feel what it is like *to be* them.

The collection of stories is deftly ordered. Right from the start, we encounter the exquisiteness of Macy’s writing with sentence after sentence containing alluring metaphors, and the stories that follow wholly satisfy the expectations formed by first impressions. A few, like “The Sweet-Talking Ladies in the White Trailer” and “Beyond Yuquot,” are short poetic vignettes. “Lipstick” is very short but packs a punch in a few

words. Rare are the stories that elicit gasps or laughter: “Lipstick” and “House, Waving Good-bye,” which is a lengthy and deep narrative, are two of them. “Overburdened” is the longest story in the collection. It is dense with coastal geological information that is, perhaps, further evidence of Macy’s “off-the-grid” employment. The story is a page-turner, yet it ends with the satisfying reassurance that humanity and justice are still in our midst. Any more information than this will spoil the surprises. Just read it!

British Columbia in the Balance:

1846–1871

Jean Barman

Madeira Park, BC: Harbour
Publishing, 2022. 320 pp. \$36.95
paper.

KENNETH FAVRHOLDT

Archivist, Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc

J EAN BARMAN has written another masterful book about British Columbia. Her new work is an analysis of the province’s history from 1846, the year of the Oregon Treaty when British sovereignty was asserted, until 1871, when the Colony of British Columbia became a province of Canada. Barman’s search to discover how British Columbia was transformed in such a short time from a fur-trade realm into a part of the Canadian Confederation led her to seek out “who was responsible for that outcome and how it was accomplished” (15).

Between these crucial historical “bookend” dates, Barman forms a thesis based on two complementary perspectives – viewing the past both from the “top down” and from the “bottom up.” James Douglas and the governors of the colony

represent the hierarchical top-down perspective. Douglas's correspondence with the Colonial Office in London is a critical source of the decisions affecting the outcome of British Columbia's development. Barman states that, "had it not been for Douglas and the Colonial Office acting in tandem and separately, British Columbia would have ... passed into the hands of the United States" (16).

Barman takes us from the final days of the Hudson's Bay Company's rule to the founding of the Colony of Vancouver Island in 1849 and to Douglas, who had a mandate over both, and his encouragement of settlement. The gold rush of 1858 then changed everything. Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton came on the scene as the secretary of state to the colonies in 1858, the year British Columbia became a colony (in the month of August). The Royal Engineers were on hand in 1859 to survey townsites, build roads, and guard against the threat of American annexation and Indigenous uprisings.

Douglas retired in 1864 and Arthur Kennedy became the new governor of Vancouver Island in March 1864, Frederick Seymour becoming the governor of British Columbia the same year. After much wrangling, the union of the two colonies was enacted in November 1866.

Midway through her discourse, Barman pivots to looking at the story from a bottom-up view, initially focusing on Anglican bishop George Hills, who came to British Columbia in 1860. In the letters of Hills and Sophia Cracroft we find a visit by Lady Franklin, widow of the ill-fated Arctic explorer, and get a glimpse of the racial diversity of Victoria society, which included Black, Chinese, and Indigenous people.

The Hills chapter is followed by the bottom-up perspective of gold miners. Here Barman touches on settler-Indigenous relations and then devotes

a chapter to "Crediting Indigenous Women," without whom "there might well have been no British Columbia in the form we know today" (252). Ultimately, Barman's thesis is that "gold miners and Indigenous women tipped the balance from the bottom up" (16). According to her, the miners who settled down with Indigenous women and produced families contributed to creating a stabilizing influence. However, she plays down the role of Indigenous men as miners and their ties to the land.

Surprisingly, Barman does not give much attention to the "Fraser Canyon War," and the Chilcotin War in the spring of 1864 is given only a passing reference. Surely these two events presaged the future course of BC history (Siegel; Skelton) – that of land claims and reconciliation. Indeed, British Columbia's development may have taken a different course had it not been for two visionary leaders of the time: Nlkaka'pamux Chief David Spintlum (Sexpinlhemx), who, in 1858, with support from neighbouring nations, quelled the trouble in the goldfields and made peace; and Secwépemc Chief William in the Cariboo, who, in 1859, persuaded his people not to align themselves with the Tsilhqot'in Nation, thus thwarting the latter's plan to turn back the incursion of miners and roadbuilders in 1864. Barman also discusses Anthony Musgrave, appointed governor of British Columbia in 1869, who led the colony to Confederation despite a final move by Vancouver Island merchants to join the United States.

Barman succeeds in laying the groundwork for a deeper look at the role of Indigenous-settler relations in this period. She compiles her data in a clear and direct manner, using a singular approach to analyze an important period. Barman is a consummate researcher, providing quotes and footnotes on nearly

every one of her book's 292 text pages, followed by an appendix (listing all the members of the Colonial Office) and an index. There is no bibliography as all references are provided in the footnotes. This book is an essential read for students and scholars of British Columbia.

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Religion at the Edge: Nature, Spirituality, and Secularity in the Pacific Northwest

Paul Bramadat,
Patricia O'Connell, and
Sarah Wilkins LaFlamme

Vancouver: UBC Press, 2022.
266 pp. \$34.95 paper.

FR. THOMAS MURPHY, S.J.
Boston College

IREAD THIS BOOK shortly after studying new historiographical work comparing the cross-border experiences of Rochester, New York, and St. Catharine's, Ontario, during the Underground Railroad. Thus, I turned from the Niagara region to this multi-disciplinary cross-border study of Cascadian spirituality. *Religion at the Edge* is part of a flowering of American-Canadian comparative studies that is transforming views of North American culture and history. Since the various contributors to the Cascadian volume

see that region's religious experiences as a possible paradigm for the future of all of North America, it is good to note that this volume parallels studies emerging from other cross-border regions.

The Centre for Studies in Religion and Society sponsors this volume. Experts in philosophy, theology/religious studies, sociology, history, law, political science, and Indigenous studies came together to conduct a field survey of Cascadian spirituality. They shared findings and drafts with each other and made changes under each other's influence, as clearly described in the text. Even readers who may not be that interested in religion will find in this volume a fine description of scholarly interaction.

The contributors initially designated four main areas of exploration in their study of Cascadia. First, the region, in contrast with other areas of North America, was born secular and remains so, often through many generations. Second, a small if still shrinking number of liberal and mainline Christian denominations continue to function there. Third, due largely to immigration, there is a persistent presence of relatively conservative Christian and non-Christian religious communities that hold traditional social values. Finally, the authors set out to explore a general openness to spiritual seeking within Cascadia, a trend heavily influenced by individualism and libertarianism.

The contributors reached several conclusions. Cascadia's religious experience is different from that of the rest of North America, with many inhabitants finding spiritual fulfilment outside traditional religion. However, they also believe that the weakness of organized religion in Cascadia – a tendency so great that the region is often designated the “None Zone” – will soon prove to have been prophetic of the growing secularization of the

whole North American continent. What the contributors call “Reverential Naturalism” is the essential foundation of regional spirituality. Indigenous tradition and the modern environmental movement inspire this reverence for the earth.

Finally, the border continues to matter with regard to how American and Canadian Cascadians approach all these questions. The contributors found that British Columbians are more sensitive to Indigenous influence than are Americans because the Indigenous culture in British Columbia is both larger and more activist. They also found a greater appreciation for immigration in Canada than in the United States, and a higher willingness to involve an activist government in the task of caring for the community. These variations stand out within the otherwise shared culture.

The volume ends with a call for further studies in certain areas. The authors believe that remote rural areas such as northern BC and eastern Washington and Oregon require further examination. They also raise important questions about the potential role of Cascadian spirituality in promoting racial reconciliation throughout the continent.

A historian like myself has questions about the possibility of predicting the future. Will organized religion really become as weak throughout North America as it is in Cascadia itself? It is too soon to tell. Speaking also as a Catholic and a Jesuit priest, I see a rich potential for dialogue between the incarnational theology of the Roman Catholic Church and Cascadia’s reverential naturalism. Spokespeople for other denominations may come forward with suggestions of their own for dialogue. Meanwhile, this volume offers an indispensable tool for any such dialogues, and I highly

recommend it as a tool for meeting Cascadian people at their spiritual heart.

Out of Hiding: Holocaust Literature of British Columbia

Alan Twigg

Vancouver: Ronsdale Press, 2022.

334 pp. \$24.95 paper.

PAULA J. DRAPER

Toronto

IN THE BEGINNING, there was Robert Krell. A Dutch hidden child survivor who became professor of psychiatry at UBC, Krell is the patriarch of Holocaust remembrance in British Columbia. His medical career was devoted to the treatment of Jewish survivors of the Holocaust and other victims of trauma. Taking a leadership role in British Columbia’s Jewish community, in the 1970s Krell co-founded the committee that led to the creation of the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre. In 1978 he organized the first project in Canada recording the testimonies of Holocaust survivors, and in 1982 he created an organization devoted to bringing child survivors together to share their unique challenges. Appropriately, this dense volume is dedicated to him.

In *Out of Hiding: Holocaust Literature of British Columbia*, prolific writer, journalist, and polymath Alan Twigg fulfills a self-imposed injunction to contribute to the collective responsibility to know “more than just a little” about the Holocaust (1). Not only does this volume include the personal stories of survivors who settled in British Columbia, it provides a multitude of historical detail in each section. Twigg strives to contextualize individual experiences of the Holocaust in a way that offers

general readers a wider understanding of the immense scope of the Shoah. A section on a survivor from Greece, or Hungary, or France includes the history of the lost world of European Jewry in each locale and other stories of horror, survival, rescue, and resistance. The back cover of the paperback describes it as an “illustrated, patchwork quilt of memory and history.” Indeed, in *Out of Hiding* Twigg tries to include everyone who has ever lived in British Columbia and has written about their Holocaust experiences, created visual art or commemorative exhibits, scholarly articles, poetry, or fictional accounts relating to persecution during the Second World War.

The volume begins with detailed entries about three “Leaders” of BC remembrance: Krell, Robbie Waisman, and Rudolf Vrba. Waisman, who was fourteen when he was liberated from Buchenwald, is another leader in western Canada’s survivor community. Like many profiled in this volume, he arrived in British Columbia later in life, contributing both in Calgary and Saskatoon as a survivor speaker and Jewish community volunteer. However, the real focus of this section is on Vrba – a remarkable camp survivor whose escape from Auschwitz-Birkenau in the spring of 1944 (in conjunction with three other Slovak Jews, including Czesław Mordowicz, who settled in Toronto) resulted in a detailed report on the camp that was passed on to the Allies. Twigg’s focus on Vrba, who is certainly an important actor in Holocaust history, is not surprising – indeed, Twigg created a website whose sole focus is Vrba’s life. However, it can be argued that many of the others cited in the next two sections, organized by names in alphabetical order, are deserving of more detail.

Included are Leon Kahn, a former partisan; Eva Hoffman, a child of

survivors whose memoir and other non-fiction works are staples of Holocaust literature; H. Peter Oberlander, a leader in British Columbia’s urban planning who was interned in Canada as an enemy alien during the war; Jennie Mines, likely the only Canadian-born citizen to survive the concentration camps; and Richard Menkis, a UBC historian and child of survivors who is a pioneer in the scholarship of Canada and the Holocaust. Adding to this “patchwork,” the volume ends with a theoretical essay about hiding written by Vancouver scholar, rabbi, and philanthropist Yosef Wosk.

This is by no means a scholarly work. The biographies lack chronology and are often hard to follow. It would have benefited from judicious editing. Yet Twigg set himself an enormous task and BC readers will be rightly impressed with the compilation of local sources on the Holocaust.

Tom Perry was a doctor who entered Buchenwald concentration camp nine days after it was liberated. He wrote his wife about what he had witnessed. His photos and letter are preserved by the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre and reprinted here. Perry wrote: “I saw things I have never seen before ... That’s what I saw today. The unadulterated, entirely unexaggerated truth. There was much more than that, but I can’t begin to describe it in words.” *Out of Hiding* serves as a witness and an important contribution to Holocaust memory.

*Union Zindabad! South Asian
Canadian Labour History in
British Columbia*

Donna Sacuta, Bailey Garden,
and Anushay Malik

Abbotsford, BC: University of
Fraser Valley South Asian Studies
Institute, 2022. 120 pp. \$10.00 paper.

NEILESH BOSE
University of Victoria

A BOOK accompanying the exhibit of the same title (<https://pressbooks.pub/unionzindabad/>), *Union Zindabad* looks at South Asian labour history in Canada through a variety of lenses. Beginning with the migrations of the early twentieth century, the book includes chapters on early migrants, revolutionaries, unions, and the struggles of South Asian labour activists and leaders. Written by Donna Sacuta and Bailey Garden of BC Labour Heritage and Anushay Malik, a labour historian of South Asia, *Union Zindabad* reflects the research and expertise of a diversity of subfields and perspectives within labour history. A unique contribution to the history of Canada and the wider history of South Asian diasporas, this book focuses on labour and political organizing throughout the history of the South Asian presence in Canada.

After chapters 1 through 3 recount well-known facts regarding South Asian presence in Canada, such as the *Komagata Maru* incident of 1914, chapters 4 through 7 probe the trajectories of union membership and struggles against racism within unions and across the broader social landscape of British Columbia. Noteworthy elements of this history feature the initial entry of South Asians into the international timber workers

union in 1917 (chapter 4) and the oft-overlooked role of women workers and activists (chapter 6), emphasizing the imprint of revolutionaries and radicals in British Columbia ever since the rise of the Ghadar movement in the 1910s. Women such as Rattan Kaur Atwal, daughter-in-law of a famous Ghadarite, and Jinny Sims, activist and daughter of a labour leader in England, offer snapshots of the world of women workers and leaders from within the community. Likely unknown to readers outside Canada, the book devotes chapter 7 to the landmark Canadian Farmworkers Union, led in the 1980s by activist and labour leader Raj Chouhan. His historic meetings with Cesar Chavez comprise one of the many important aspects of this history that link with wider struggles across North America. As one of the few works in this field to span the entire twentieth century, this book includes a chapter titled “New Alliances,” which inquires about the changing political economy of the late twentieth century. From the 1980s, the decline of forestry and sawmills led to a rise in taxi work, entrepreneurship, longshore work, and entry into the trucking sector. Across the twentieth century, the book emphasizes not only the persistence of the racism faced by South Asians but also the persistence of struggle, presence, and political engagement with the broader labour infrastructure and Canadian politics.

Canadian readers have long awaited a fully annotated entry into a multifaceted study of this topic, which links the history of Canada, the history of South Asia, and the global history of labour. Building on foundational works by scholars such as Hugh Johnston, *Union Zindabad* brings the story to the late twentieth century and focuses on a range of individuals in the BC landscape, from early twentieth-century leaders such as Husain Rahim

and Darshan Singh Sangha to more recent figures such as Raj Chouhan and Jinny Sims. Union Zindabad builds upon a sturdy foundation in the well-known histories of Punjabi migration and settlement, and the lives and histories of other South Asians, such as post-1947 Indian, Pakistani, and (since 1971) Bangladeshi entrants. The lives of migrants from other parts of the former British Empire, such as eastern and southern Africa, await future study. For those interested in South Asian migration and diasporic history in other areas of the world, such as South Africa, the Caribbean, and the United States of America, Union Zindabad provides an exemplary model of history that focuses on racism, struggle, and conflict without reifying difference or embracing assimilationist myths in place of history.¹ Through its richly documented tour of South Asian labour history in British Columbia, Union Zindabad displays how the historical journeys of South Asians in Canada exist alongside the struggles, hopes, and efforts of a range of other social formations and communities in the modern world.

¹ For an overview of the field of South Asian migrations history, see Neilesh Bose, ed., *South Asian Migrations in Global History: Labor, Law, and Wayward Lives* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020). Comparable histories include Gaiutra Bahadur's memoir/history *Coolie Woman: An Odyssey of Indenture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); and Vivek Bald's social history of Bengali migrants to the United States in *Bengali Harlem and Lost Histories of South Asian America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013). Goolam Vahed and Ashwin Desai's study of late apartheid South African Indians in *Colour, Class, and Community: The Natal Indian Congress, 1971–1994* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2021) brings together labour history and political dynamics in a settler society that yields lessons for other settler societies in the midst of worldwide transitions.

*A Journey Back to Nature:
A History of Strathcona
Provincial Park*

Catherine Marie Gilbert

Victoria, BC: Heritage House
Publishing, 2021. 256 pp.
\$26.95 paper.

PATRICK HAYES
University of Victoria

SPACES LIKE Strathcona Provincial Park, the oldest provincial park in British Columbia and the largest on Vancouver Island, were created to give settlers a place to escape the pressures of their increasingly urban lifestyles. Catherine Marie Gilbert writes in the preface of *A Journey Back to Nature* that those who conceived of Strathcona in 1911 were “looking for a journey back to nature,” a place to return to “the era before the Industrial Revolution” – a rationale Gilbert contends is even more important today (7). This assertion, signalled in the book's title, is one of the core arguments of the work. Gilbert sees parks as an inherently positive concept and as spaces that deserve and require protection and stewardship by the public, politicians, and dedicated individuals.

The exploration of the personal stories of individuals who fought to protect Strathcona is a strength of this book. In this pursuit, a wide range of documentary sources, interviews, and images are used to craft what is an engaging and well-written work. These stories include those of Price Ellison and his expedition of 1910, which set out to determine whether or not Strathcona was a suitable location for a park. That journey was motivated by the success of Rocky Mountains Park (later renamed Banff National Park),

established in 1885, which became a hotspot for tourists due to the building of a railway. However, that success came at the expense of Indigenous Peoples, who were expelled and excluded soon after the park's opening.

Ellison's expedition resulted in a "glowing" report back to officials in Victoria, and, soon after, Strathcona Provincial Park was created with equally little regard paid to the First Nations who had used this land for millennia (64). Gilbert acknowledges this in the introduction and briefly explores Vancouver Island's long history of human habitation, including some recent and fascinating archaeological finds within the park that highlight the diverse range of uses Indigenous communities had for this land through time. However, this book does not engage beyond this with the broader literature on parks, reconciliation, and Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

Rather, the focus is very much on the settlers who created, exploited, enjoyed, and worked to protect the park. After initial prewar efforts to bring tourists to the park failed, the need to safeguard Strathcona from development became more pressing in the 1950s when the BC Power Commission proposed building a dam at Buttle Lake – an area of great natural beauty. An intense battle ensued, with individuals like conservationist Roderick Haig-Brown advocating for the preservation of the park. That battle was eventually lost, and a dam was built, but it was not the last fight over the park's integrity.

In the 1960s and early 1970s, government decisions allowed for a series of land swaps and developments on the part of mining and logging companies, including the opening of a mine by the Westmin Company at Myra Creek. A moratorium on new prospecting was introduced in 1973, but by the mid-1980s

the recommendations of the newly created Wilderness Advisory Committee opened the doors for new development in the park, including a proposed mine by the Cream Silver Company at Cream Lake. The Friends of Strathcona Park (FOSP) was formed to fight this mine, and again Gilbert explores in detail the contribution of individuals like Jim and Myrna Boulding, Marlene Smith, and others to this struggle. Following a determined protest campaign, the FOSP successfully prevented the opening of new mines, and by 1993 the provincial government launched a new Master Plan for the park that secured its future to the present day.

The Master Plan itself promised to "work with government agencies, regional districts, the public, industry, and private land holders to protect wildlife, recreation and aesthetic values along the park boundaries and control access into the wilderness areas" (189). The exclusion of First Nations from this consultative and cooperative process could have warranted more exploration by Gilbert. While it is briefly noted that some First Nations leaders supported the FOSP in its campaign, there is a lack of more substantive discussion around the absence of Indigenous representation and perspective in decision-making regarding the park's future.

Nor is there any attempt here, or elsewhere in this work, to critically analyze or question the language used by BC Parks and others to promote and describe Strathcona, some of which the author repeats. Words such as "wilderness," "pristine," "untouched," and "primeval" are used throughout, but these terms have been challenged by environmental historians as cultural constructs that often ignore the roles and history of Indigenous Peoples. There could have been a deeper engagement with this wider literature on concepts

of nature and the motivations and ideals behind the western conservationist movement itself.

Overall, this is an articulate and well-researched book that emphasizes the need for environmental stewardship and watchfulness. The author's own admiration and respect for those who fought to preserve Strathcona is also very clear and inspirational. The main flaw lies in the lack of engagement with wider debates and discussions over the concept of parks, the language we use to describe them, and the role of Indigenous Peoples in the past and future. This is a shame as these elements would have added another interesting dimension to an already valuable book.

*Alone in the Great Unknown:
One Woman's Remarkable
Adventures in the
Northwestern Wilderness*
Caroll Simpson

Madeira Park, BC: Harbour
Publishing, 2022. 256 pp.
\$26.95 paper.

JANET NICOL
Vancouver

CAROLL SIMPSON offers a dramatic window into the realities – and mysteries – of life off the grid in north central British Columbia in her non-fiction account, *Alone in the Great Unknown*. A former elementary school teacher now living on Vancouver Island, the author mined her personal journals over a ten-year period beginning in 1996 to describe her experiences as sole owner of Ookpike Wilderness Lodge on Babine Lake. Themes of wilderness survival, female empowerment, and

environmental activism emerge, her stories being both harrowing and joyful.

The book includes Simpson's artwork. Instructive maps underscore her geographical isolation. The lakeside lodge and five small cabins were surrounded by seven and a half acres (three hectares) of diverse, old-growth forest. Access was by boat in the summer and in the winter by an icebreaker barge and snowshoe trek. Granisle, population three hundred, was the nearest settler village. Twenty members of the Tachet Band travelled seasonally to Old Fort, a First Nation village ten kilometres away by water.

Simpson's wilderness adventure began after she convinced her carpenter-husband David to sell their "empty-nest" home on Whidbey Island in Washington State. Once settled in the lodge, the couple began preparing the premises for clients. In October 1996, in the midst of planning, David died of a heart attack, aged forty-seven. Grief-stricken, the author nonetheless made the decision to stay on at the lodge.

Simpson's steep learning curve included discovering that the property was surrounded by industrial forest. She saw the risks of the "monoculture" practice of replacing old-growth forest with new plantations of single species trees. Alex Michelle, a member of the Tachet First Nation, to whom Simpson devotes an insightful chapter, told her: "I have walked these forests all my life. Now I get lost" (62).

Other northern residents also cared deeply about clear-cutting, some of them speaking out alongside Simpson at meetings with forestry and government officials. "It was gratifying, early on, to meet like-minded people willing to fight the powers that be to save some of the natural habitats we mutually respected," Simpson writes (67). Her years of activism are threaded throughout the book,

concluding with an impressive report on policy successes. Given the author's experiences, a "further reading" list would be an enlightening addition for the reader.

Friends and family visited the lodge in the summer months along with clients, and Simpson relays stories about them all. She had two dogs and a collection of guns to provide a measure of protection while on her own. Unwanted house guests included a woodchuck, a pack rat, and martens. Whether Simpson was walking or driving a vehicle, she had to watch out for grizzlies, moose, and cougars. Storms and extreme weather also provided fodder for hair-raising tales. Money proved to be another challenge, but, ever resourceful, Simpson found various jobs near the lodge and, during winter months, in Washington State. Magical moments are also recounted, among them the author's sighting of three trumpeter swans on the lake. More details of Simpson's emotional journey (such as grief, loneliness, and recovery) would be illuminating, possibly by way of a sketch or excerpts from her journal.

In 2005, Simpson remarried, and the couple remained at the lodge until 2018. When the property was bought by members of four bands of the Dakelh (Carrier) Nation, the author experienced one of many "full circle" moments in her life. Simpson has written a compelling story with warmth and compassion, revealing a northerner's necessary courage and self-reliance and conveying a deep appreciation for British Columbia's at-risk wilderness.

*Rez Rules: My Indictment of
Canada's and America's
Systemic Racism Against
Indigenous Peoples*
Chief Clarence Louie

Toronto: McClelland and Stewart,
2023. 352 pp. \$16.00 paper.

ASHLEY KYNE
Simon Fraser University

WITH THIS book, Chief Clarence Louie (*y'ilmix^wm ki law na*) of the Osoyoos Indian Band (OIB) illuminates the Indigenous experience in Canada – a nation built on systemic racism. As one of the country's most effective leaders, Louie has rescued Indigenous voices from the fringes of settler society and has helped his people to cultivate land in traditional and non-traditional ways to create the "Miracle in the Desert" (xiii).

Elected as Chief of the OIB at the age of twenty-four, Louie has led his community for approximately four decades. Countering misconceptions about Indigenous Chiefs and bands, Louie explains: "Chief and council are not the only leaders on a Rez ... Anyone who collects a paycheque on behalf of a band or tribe holds a leadership position" (5). Inspiration from OIB members has allowed Louie to transform his previously poverty-stricken community into an economic powerhouse. Unlike government bureaucrats who collect their paycheques and pensions, money that could otherwise be used to improve the conditions of Indigenous Peoples, Louie used his power to create more jobs on the reserve than there are members. Speaking against hard truths and making decisions that would increase the economic development of the OIB, Louie hopes his book inspires his people to "act and

live like hard-working people as [their] ancestors once did" (11).

Of course, the journey to achieve this impact took work. Louie began his life avoiding rez bombs and embracing tough love, experiences that eventually gained him a '66 Pontiac GTO, work experience, and education. As a youth, Louie was inspired by Indigenous scholars who wrote about "Indian resistance" (23). He even experienced one of his earliest memories of leadership during "The Run," which stood for "Treaties Honoured Entirely – Reservations Under Natives" (28). As a participant in this political and spiritual event, Louie was one of the best runners and he never gave up. While others took breaks or found an easy way out, Louie learned that real leaders do not take it easy or rest. Instead, "a leader takes on extra responsibility and does things a majority of people don't want to do" (31).

Through his strong-willed personality, Louie strives for the best for his community and its future. Yearning for his people to take power back into their own hands, Louie writes, "I want us to get back on our Indian 'economic horse' – to create jobs, real career-orientated jobs, and make our own money instead of waiting around for the next grant" (151). There is also something to be said about Louie's resilience and aspirations as being exemplary for leaders seeking to overcome intergenerational trauma (39). Finally, Louie notes that internal fights are not sustainable for the community in the long term; rather, leaders must be willing to stand up, take responsibility, and get things done for the collective good.

With the future of his children, grandchildren, and band at stake, Louie looks for *real* leadership potential. However, the criteria of a good-hearted, hard-working, diligent, educated, and culturally motivated youth is only

the beginning of what a Chief is (6). In addition, real leadership requires authenticity and an understanding that, "in a real democracy, it's okay to disagree and still be on the same team" (9). Fortunately, Louie's *Rez Rules* advises a future leader to pony up and become the leader her/his/their community desires. It is to be hoped, that this person will be someone who buries her/his/their heart on the rez (326).

*The Kootenay Wolves:
Five Years Following a
Wild Wolf Pack*

John E. Marriott

Victoria, BC: Rocky Mountain
Books, 2022. 176 pp.
\$45.00 cloth.

GARY PARKSTROM
Selkirk College

AS MUCH AS *The Kootenay Wolves* is a moving portrait of a Kootenay National Park family of wolves, it is also the story of John E. Marriott's growing and deepening abilities in photography. We are taken on a journey of discovery as members of the Kootenay pack are revealed one by one and as Marriott details his attempts to effectively establish the least intrusive relationship possible between photographer and *Canis lupus*. Incredible photographs on each page beautifully reveal the intimate yet voyeuristic relationship Marriott built with these wolves, and the accompanying written story provides some of the context and details about how he painstakingly grew to know the pack without them knowing him.

Marriott's writing brings alive the issues facing wolves in our national parks

and outside their somewhat protective boundaries. Detailed maps and extensive data are not provided, but this dedicated photographer shares his unique and valuable insights into the countless perilous hazards facing the Kootenay wolf family for which, by the end of the story, he helps us feel deep emotional concern.

Some argue that natural history stories of wolves detract from the work of biologists to portray an accurate scientific representation of the species. However, in her sweeping review of the literature, academic or otherwise, Karen Jones (2011) concludes that “*all* wolf tales reflect the trappings of contemporary society” (emphasis in original). In addition, internationally recognized wolf researcher Paul Paquet, who pens the foreword to *The Kootenay Wolves*, provides a whole-hearted endorsement of Marriott’s work.

One of the more valuable aspects of Marriott’s work is that it shows how national parks provide a space in which relationships between animals and people of settler-colonial society can develop, a place in which wolves live in close proximity to the scent of humans. As Marriott puts it, “If they avoided every single area where they smelled humans, they wouldn’t have anywhere left to go” (108). Despite the pervasive human presence in the parks, Marriott is ethically committed to taking every precaution to conceal not only his presence from wolves but also his interest in wolves from other photographers.

This does raise the question of what exactly the relationship between people and wolves should be. Unfortunately, there is no mention of an attempt to seek the guidance of the region’s Indigenous Peoples to learn how the relationship between countless generations of wolves and humans was conducted prior to colonization.

However, like a budding romance, the eager excitement of innocence builds throughout the story of Marriott’s dedication to getting to know these wolves. He demonstrates a deep concern for each individual wolf, and the amount of time spent searching, waiting, and learning is truly admirable. Throughout the text, Marriott takes time to reflect and to verify that his conduct is responsible with regard to the well-being of the wolf family.

Throughout this book, Marriott passionately advocates for the conservation of wolves and points to the provinces’ outdated, colonial management practices. For example, wolves can still be shot year-round in many parts of British Columbia and Alberta, and their deaths do not have to be reported. As a consequence, “No one knows how many wolves get killed each year during hunting season on the park boundary” (150). A tragic, moving encounter with trapping shows just how deep a relationship Marriott has built with this family of wolves.

While exceptional as a work of photography alone, Marriott’s story of wolves in Kootenay National Park is a truly inspirational tale of how one person can earn, through dedication, devotion, and skill, a sacred glimpse of one of the most wary, mysterious, and complex creatures in the Rocky Mountains.

REFERENCES

- Jones, Karen. 2011. “Writing the Wolf: Canine Tales and North American Environmental-Literary Tradition.” *Environment and History* 17, no. 2: 201–28.