

BOOK REVIEWS

*Creating a Modern Countryside:
Liberalism and Land
Resettlement in British Columbia*

James Murton

Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007, xxix,
268 pp. Illus. Foreword by Graeme
Wynn. \$32.95 paper.

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BRITISH COLUMBIA IS noteworthy among Canadian provinces for its paucity of good farmland. Too much is rocky, the coastal forests are daunting, a great deal is arid, elevations are too great to support crops, and the better part of the rest is vertical. Notwithstanding a few lush valleys with moderate climates, the whole has very limited agricultural potential. This has not held back governments from trying to do something about it.

In the years immediately after the Great War, BC administrations tried to reconceptualize, recast, and resettle lands that had never before seen the plough. Applying the new-found power of the state and what seemed at the time like the rich possibilities held out by science, the provincial government

and its agents tried to build a brighter future through the farming of reluctant landscapes. By creating an idealized countryside of smallholdings, they sought to carve out a niche for returned soldiers and others who sought peace on the land. This “peace” entailed more than just relief from war: it also held the promise of respite from modernity and its chief forms – industrialization and cities. These new model farmers would, indeed, be yeomen insofar as they were independent and self-sustaining. But they were, as well, set down the path towards an alternative modernity by a liberal state willing to actively shape society with dredges, flumes, and barbed wire.

In *Creating a Modern Countryside*, James Murton examines four very different BC settlements that sprang out of interwar beliefs that science could mould the wilderness into something that looked recognizably like “countryside” and communities of self-supporting (if not self-sufficient) settlers could be established as exemplars of a rural, “alternative modernism.” Merville (in the clear-cut rainforest north of Courtenay), Sumas (in the Fraser Valley), Oliver (in the south Okanagan), and Camp Lister (south of Creston, itself remote) are treated in

turn. Merville and Lister were soldier settlement projects; Sumas and Oliver, agricultural projects. The principal difference seems to be that huge sums of money were thrown at the latter pair to recreate the environment into a farmable countryside. At Sumas a tidal lake had to be drained. It was done, but the costs were enormous and the returns very slender. In the south Okanagan, the desert had to be reclaimed through irrigation. Of the four, Oliver most nearly met its promise. To Murton, it succeeds in part because the engineers involved tried to work with nature rather than against it (as was most clearly the case at Sumas).

The career of Thomas “Duff” Pattullo figures large in this account. It was Pattullo’s role as minister of lands in the 1920s and his willingness to spend, spend, spend that brought results in Oliver, the community named after Pattullo’s boss. (One cannot but speculate that taking the name of the premier contributed to the Okanagan project’s success.) The book closes with the impact of the 1930s Depression on visions of a rural modernity. It was, in a word, disastrous. An obvious solution to urban mass unemployment would be to afford people the chance to become farmers. But the goal of masculine self-sufficiency on the land gave way in the 1930s to subsistence farming, and even that could not be sustained. It was, as Murton points out, “a counsel of despair” (175). Pattullo thus presided over the brightest and (as premier) the darkest moments of these back-to-the-land movements; his choices took the Liberal party in British Columbia through an interventionist, pro-rural, pro-planning phase (with individualism at its heart) and into a conservative, pro-capitalist, and pro-urban version of the New Deal.

Creating a Modern Countryside stands apart from an older generation of political histories of the province in that Murton does not mistake the best will in the world for success. Murton’s environmental concerns – which come down to an interest in how the land is understood by those who wish to live upon and use it – adds a further dimension. But he shares intellectual terrain with Ruth Sandwell and Ian McKay, complementing and articulating through example their observations about Canadian liberalism. Sometimes this feels like contortion. The ability of Liberals to embrace and then discard a policy of alternative modernity – essentially a rejection of modern urban industrialism – is insufficiently contextualized within contemporary Liberal modernity. The Liberals might have had a vision of the country, but they were also a party of the city. Were they hobby farmers on a provincial scale? Two words seem to escape Murton’s vocabulary. As near as I can see, Murton never refers to the liberal Liberals either as “pragmatists” or as “reactionaries,” and yet they compromise their vision repeatedly while championing the ideal of the gentleman orchardist/farmer. Another term, “antimodernism,” is disposed of rather carelessly on pages 55 and 175, but some of the Liberals’ understandings of rural life would clearly qualify for this description. He identifies a-liberal elements that found a home within modern liberalism (11–13), but that is neither particularly explicit nor especially helpful, a bit like finding shades of red in royal purple. He is at pains to show how their policy was neither Arcadian nor Agrarian but Alternative Modern. This is a difficult balancing act. Arcadian and Agrarian values are the ghosts that haunt this story, lurking in the hedgerows and

orchards, possessing a politician in the odd speech or manifesting in a brochure.

There is the question, too, of what would constitute "success." Is it reasonable to expect 100 percent of the settlers in these experiments to produce thriving farm operations? Perhaps at the time, perhaps when carried away by their own rhetoric, politicians like Oliver and Pattullo might have looked for 200 percent success, with newly arrived rural-modernites elbowing their way into the modified environments. But what about now? Might we not set the bar a bit lower and say, given what we know about soil and market conditions, 26 percent continuous occupation of farms constitutes success? Murton wrestles with this question of conditional success and says of Merville and its legacy: "Any place that can produce such warmth and generosity cannot be labelled a mistake or a failure" (106). Perhaps not, but Murton's own very fine writing gives us a tragic account of the devastating 1922 fire in Merville – caused almost certainly by wasteful, lazy, and ecologically foolish logging practices coupled to rail transport that spat sparks onto dry tinder – and we are left gasping for air. The tale is genuinely terrible and Murton recounts it with skill. It is hard to look these grieving families in the historical eye and not call the whole project a total bungle.

At the end of the day, this is not a book about farming. It is a study of policy making, ideology, and the sheer cussedness of the physical world when confronted by cocky science. The title is, in this regard, misleading. Better it should have taken its name from this nice line penned by Murton, who describes agriculture in mountainous British Columbia as "farming in the clouds." The ideological goals of the

government and the agricultural-scientific theory of the day were no less airy and rarefied.

Culturing Wilderness in Jasper National Park: Studies in Two Centuries of Human History in the Upper Athabasca River Watershed

I.S. MacLaren, editor

Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2007. 356 pp. \$45.00 paper.

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IN 1910, D.J. BENHAM wrote of the new Jasper National Park, "Here may be seen Nature primeval, Nature benignant and Nature malignant – the glorious heritage of a Canadian nation" (xxv). People don't really talk of "Nature primeval" anymore, but the language of wilderness and national heritage still surrounds Canada's mountain parks. Which is why it was such a pleasure to read *Culturing Wilderness in Jasper National Park: Studies in Two Centuries of Human History in the Upper Athabasca River Watershed*. This beautiful volume describes the Jasper familiar to many of us (including a few wry references to driving ninety kilometres per hour down the Icefields Parkway) but, more importantly, places it in a much larger story of human/non-human interaction.

In his introduction, Ian MacLaren identifies several ways, from transmontane corridor to playground, in which Jasper has been a human space. Michael Payne's valuable study of the fur trade on the Upper Athabaska River demonstrates not only a long-

standing human presence but also its ecological confines. Traders were disinclined to establish posts on the eastern slopes of the Rockies because limited food sources meant First Nations (as fur suppliers) were largely transient. In a nicely crafted arc, Payne links the inhabited landscape of the early nineteenth century with that of the twentieth century, as historians commemorated fur trade posts as an original transcontinental link even as railway surveyors, ironically, were demolishing Jasper House (24-25). The fur trade era owes much of its reputation to the art of Paul Kane, as MacLaren notes in his analysis of Kane and Henry James Warre, both of whom passed through Jasper in the mid-1840s. By cross-referencing sketches with fieldnotes, Kane's landscape log, and his own photographs, MacLaren identifies their artistic arrangements, "when battures simply [did] not measure up to mountains aesthetically" (60) in the picturesque. This past/present comparison provides useful evidence of landscape change, a theme throughout the collection.

The next set of essays deals with Jasper's early years as a national park. Peter J. Murphy tracks the moveable feast of the park's boundaries before 1930 (thankfully, with excellent maps) as the eastern slopes were drawn alternately as park and forest reserve, all the while contested by different branches in the Department of the Interior, the Province of Alberta, and park users. The disparity between Ottawa's agendas and distant, centralist management – consider the bizarrely perfect rectangle that was Rocky Mountain Park – and local use is another theme that resonates throughout park history in Canada. In 1980, Murphy interviewed Edward Wilson Moberly, a Métis whose family was dispossessed by Jasper's creation.

His transcribed life story is fascinating to read, but it is particularly useful to *Culturing Wilderness* for its description of the Métis use of the land: planned burnings, grazing, guiding, and so forth. The redrawing of the park's boundaries in 1911 despite a lack of knowledge about the eastern slopes prompted a survey by Mary Schäffer, a story told by PearlAnn Reichwein and Lisa McDermott. The now-iconic Maligne Lake had been excluded from the park, and Schäffer used the survey as well as her reputation as an author and mountaineer to advocate for its re-inclusion. Though the authors are generally uncritical of Schäffer's romantic view of Jasper as "paradise" or "her own private playground" (161-62), they note the politics of surveying, the power (or ego) in topographic naming, and the need for more on Aboriginal mapping. Moreover, they suggest that by seeing tourism as a policy "trade-off" for conservation, Schäffer (who later ran a gas station in Banff) reflects the political dynamics of park management at the time (187).

The evolution of that tourism concerns the next few essays. Gabrielle Zezulka-Mailloux's study of tourist pamphlets is a sophisticated reading of wilderness as defined and sold by railway companies (trading posts, Métis settlements, fifteen railway stations, and park hotels could not mar the ideal). She argues that the cultural authority wielded by the Canadian National Railways and Grand Trunk Pacific Railway came at a critical point because wilderness was still being incorporated in national consciousness (235-36). That Jasper was a setting for both recreation and select "Canadian" values is also apparent in Zac Robinson's account of "the golden years of mountaineering," which compares the public reception of two ascents in 1925. While that

of Mount Alberta, by members of the Japanese Alpine Club, was more technically skilful, Robinson argues that it received less attention because the Alpine Club of Canada considered the climbers of Mount Logan more in keeping with the traditional values of “aristocratic amateurism” (269). But my favourite piece in the collection is C.J. Taylor’s account of how tourism physically reshaped the park. Automobiles (and visitors) in growing numbers prompted a host of changes, from cottage subdivisions to campground design. Intense use demanded more intense management, and dramatic changes in the postwar years (such as the introduction of naturalist interpretation) indicate that this is a period that, in park management and styling, must be studied more closely. It is fitting, then, that the collection closes with an engaging reflection by Eric Higgs on the Rocky Mountain Repeat Photography Project. This project replicated photos taken by surveyor M.P. Bridgland in 1915 as a tool for ecological restoration. Higgs states strongly the need to recognize the human presence in park management, that traditional emphasis on ecosystems misses the fact that challenges to park integrity “are mostly human in nature” (289).

Despite the iconic status of the mountain parks in Canada there is a surprising lack of solid, accessible literature about park history, particularly in the postwar period. *Culturing Wilderness* is a welcome arrival, and a timely one, drawing our attention both to the centennial of Jasper itself (1907) and the upcoming centennial of the world’s first National Park Branch (1911). Indeed, I found myself wondering at times how much influence flowed between Jasper and the rest of the park system, in managerial

or scientific practice, for example. However, *Culturing Wilderness* offers not only a richer understanding of the Jasper region but also a model for collaboration between academic and public historians; for the use of diverse archival, material, and visual sources; and for writing about parks (or any presumed “wilderness”) as sites of human agendas and effort. As Jean Chrétien notes in his foreword, “Just as it is tough work making parks, it is tough making parks work!” (vii).

Finding Ft. George

Rob Budde

Madeira Park, BC: Caitlin Press,
2007. 128 pp. \$15.95 paper.

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One challenge of writing a poetry collection that centres around rural life is that the poet is automatically engaged with debates between centre and periphery, between the urban and the rural, and, in the case of Rob Budde’s *Finding Ft. George*, between the small northern town of Prince George and larger urban centres such as Vancouver and Toronto. One of the things that seems crucial to Budde is the destruction of such artificially constructed debates and categories. Indeed, *Finding Ft. George* is as much about breaking through the centre-periphery divide, about breaking through perception, as it is about Budde’s “love of Prince George and the Cariboo north-central region of BC” (back cover).

Budde’s concern with breaking tradition and blurring boundaries is no surprise, given his poetic influences.

Even a cursory survey of *Finding Ft. George* makes Budde's poetic allegiances clear through dedications to Fred Wah, George Bowering, Ken Belford, Barry McKinnon, and Si Transken. In the poem "did you say" Budde even lists his poetic muses and support network: "miki olson nichol bernstein stein silliman hejinian derksen marlatt mccaferly" (43). At best, his explicit overtures to other poets, critics, and theorists evokes an interest that can be explored at leisure and creates a sense of collaboration and community; at worst, this technique creates a sense of exclusion that may perplex readers unfamiliar with these people and close down the very dialogue he is trying to create.

While Budde operates within the frame of the avant garde, in the strain (or under the label) of l=a=n=g=u=a=g=e poetry (or perhaps closer to Ken Belford's lan[d]guage writing), it is important to note the sense of connection and collaboration Budde shares with other "westcoast poets" and writers who share a similar position or intersection of poetic, social, political, and cultural interests. Not that Budde falls into these categories precisely, or that the categories of avant garde or l=a=n=g=u=a=g=e poets are stable and agreed upon, but that the power of such a collective or collaborative group is the internal contestation, conflict, articulation, and continual development of their poetics and political work.

One strength of *Finding Ft. George* is that it resists canonicity through self-stated allegiance to west coast l=a=n=g=u=a=g=e/lan(d)guage writers and their poetics, while another is that it breaks with these influences and techniques by incorporating images of the rural and the local resource economy, thereby evoking the more traditional poetry of writers such as

Earle Birney, Peter Trower, and Patrick Lane. Budde's poetics mirror his content: he evades concrete definition in terms of this or that poetic and rejects definition as simply a rural poet. In other words, while he is actively engaged in writing the rural periphery – Prince George – he is writing it as a centre, through a poetics concurrently avant garde and traditional.

Looking outward from the centre of Prince George rather than inward from the urban, Budde surveys the landscape and sees "an intersection of opportunity, / garbage, vantage, and disinterest" (39), where the "local grocer" is "bulldozed under by the 7-Eleven," "fast food and box stores smile, / give back to the community in charity, / overload the landfill" (32), and where "the bulldozer driver is / an editor confident of his terrain, / and he leaves three trees out of every three / hundred" (20). With detail-oriented precision Budde writes back to a romanticized nature of the rural landscape and describes a community concerned with waste management, greed, the domination of global corporations, and a sustainable natural environment – in short, a global community facing global concerns as much as are the urban centres of Vancouver or Toronto. While some sense of the clichéd "supernatural British Columbia" remains in Budde's poems through short bursts of vivid imagery – "river cottonwood esker versus sky behind / sun shook, shimmered" (11), and in the imagistic short poem "ends of the earth" where "toad licks her lips / slouches in the mooseprint / hoping the earth holds on" (25) – the sublime northern landscape of British Columbia is not a central theme in the volume.

Budde is strongest when he positions northern British Columbia as a centre facing global concerns such as labour outsourcing – "we send raw logs, fire

them / straight out to China" (32) – and describes the “muggings and decades old vomit” (94) of Prince George as though he were training his critical lens on a major urban centre. While at times Budde has too much *poetry* in his poetry, is too much concerned with making himself heard through the invocation of others, he is nevertheless successful, persuasive, and insightful in dealing with the intersection of global concerns and local community, creating Prince George as a centre, and deconstructing the artificial separation of urban and rural, of periphery and centre.

*The Reckoning of Boston Jim:
A Novel*

Claire Mulligan

Victoria: Brindle and Glass Publishing, 2007. 310 pp. \$24.95 paper.

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IN THE AFTERMATH of the Crimean War, Eugene Augustus Hume resigns his commission. Later, hearing the casual remark that the charge of the Light Brigade was unnecessary, Eugene thinks to himself “The whole war was unnecessary ... The whole war was full of human error. It was foolishness that masqueraded as courage and best not spoken of” (70). When he leaves the army, an elderly relative offers to pay his fare to the goldfields of British Columbia if he promises never to return to England. “She then made a promise herself, which was to feed any letters from him to her hounds” (216).

Eugene accepts at once and, when *The Reckoning of Boston Jim* opens, he is spending his last night in Victoria

before crossing to the mainland and continuing by paddlewheeler up the Fraser River and then overland to Barkerville. Eugene knows that he has a gift for judging when a revelry is about to turn sour, but as we follow him along the mule trail we find that he has other gifts too: a dry sense of humour and a resilient faith in the future despite what must strike his companions on the goldfields as crushing proof that the future will be grim. He also has the knack for a pretty turn of phrase and has mastered the art of letting down gently; when the owner of the hotel in Victoria invites him to spend the night in her room, Eugene is repelled. “My principles will not allow me to compromise your reputation,” he [replies], but with resignation and regret, as if his principles were grim, unyielding relatives” (19).

If conversation and sociability smooth Eugene’s path through life, how tortuous must be the life of Boston Jim himself. He is taciturn, almost mute, ill-educated, gruff. His moral compass leads him in conflicting directions. Without a moment’s forethought, he rescues a young girl from certain danger and tries to give her a good life and hope for the future. Yet in an earlier incident, when the chief trader of a Hudson’s Bay Company fort denies Jim the £315 in wages that he has earned during his years of clerking and translating and fur trading, Jim organizes a massacre of the fort and all within it, simply so that he can force his way into the building’s strongroom and take his wages. The massacre is “the only way Boston could think to get what is rightfully his” (271).

It is hard to imagine what could bring these two men together, yet a young woman does. Dora Timmons emigrates alone, from London, and finds work as a servant in Victoria.

She soon falls in love with Eugene and agrees to marry him. Before they can marry, though, Eugene must find gold in the Cariboo. One morning, while Dora waits for him to come back to the Island, she comes across a pouch that Jim, passing through on his way to Cowichan Bay, has dropped moments before. In it is the money that he had taken from the strongroom. Jim wants to reward Dora's honesty in returning the pouch with something that will mean the world to her. As he listens to Dora tell her life's tale, he understands that what she wants more than anything else is Eugene's return. And so he determines to follow Eugene to Barkerville and bring him back. The novel is thus divided into two parts. The first describes the three characters' lives before their paths intersect, and the second describes Boston's search for Eugene. The end of the search will be abrupt and shocking.

Claire Mulligan, a native of Kelowna, is best known as a short-story writer. *The Reckoning of Boston Jim* is her first novel, and it is a wonderful début. Mulligan writes with compassion for her characters and a sharp, trustworthy eye for detail. Nobody can say for certain how life really was in the Colony of British Columbia in 1863, but Mulligan convinces us that she knows. Her descriptions of interiors and street scenes, of people's speech and clothing and manners, are reminiscent of the finest passages from Alice Munro, and her sense of humour is as dry and pleasing as Munro's. In a passage about the companions with whom Eugene searches for gold in Barkerville, Mulligan writes of Langstrom, a Swede who speaks little English:

Langstrom is the best shot of them all and as well the best cook. For these reasons they recently agreed that he should spend a half-portion of his time hunting instead of mining. Any gold would be shared equally with him, of course, just as if he were digging himself. It took some time to convey this plan to Langstrom who from their gesturing thought perhaps that they were threatening to shoot and eat him. But it has paid off. Though they are never full, they have not starved, and now and then there is enough gold scratched from the claim to buy some beans, flour, sugar even (230).

So deft is Mulligan's touch and so skilful is her writing that the larger themes of the novel – love; loss; human error, courage, and foolishness; the randomness of life – enhance and never overwhelm what remains, throughout, a sensitive and first-rate piece of storytelling.

*At the Far Reaches of Empire:
The Life of Juan Francisco de la
Bodega y Quadra*

Freeman M. Tovell

Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008. xv, 453
pp. \$85.00 cloth.

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SPANISH ACTIVITY along the Pacific Northwest Coast from 1774 to 1793 has attracted a moderate amount of scholarly attention, including monographs by Warren Cook, Donald Cutter, and John Kendrick, as well as

the publication, often in translation, of archival materials – logs, reports, and official correspondence. The subject is far from exhausted, and the appearance of this new study by Freeman Tovell, a retired Canadian diplomat, can only be welcomed. His book, by reason of its broad coverage, meticulous research, and balanced approach, will become an indispensable tool for any scholar interested in this topic.

The book has a core and outliers. A biography of Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra, a naval officer born at Lima in 1744 and deceased at Querétaro, Mexico, in 1784, constitutes the core. As a colonial, Bodega y Quadra never possessed the standing and connections needed to achieve a high rank in Spain's navy. He can be said to have given his monarch good service in difficult and unrewarding undertakings, which certainly undermined his health and probably caused his death. In terms of the dynamics of colonialism, Bodega y Quadra's life suggests that it was not just the conquered peoples who were subject to exploitation by the imperial powers. The agents the latter employed to secure their goals were often treated as no more than subalterns.

The outliers in Freeman Tovell's work are the broader issues and events in which Bodega y Quadra participated or that shaped his life and naval career. He was an important player in the Spanish attempt to preclude any foreign presence, territorial or commercial, on the Pacific coast of North America. Bodega y Quadra took part in two of the voyages (1775 and 1779, respectively) north from Mexico to Alaska. While he played no role in the confrontation between Spain and Great Britain over Nootka Sound (on the west coast of Vancouver Island) in 1789–90, he was selected in 1792 to be the Spanish agent for implementing the terms of

the three conventions that defused the crisis through a mutual renunciation of territorial sovereignty and of claims to exclusive commerce and navigation. During his mission Bodega y Quadra skilfully defended Spanish rights while maintaining warm relations with the British agent, George Vancouver. No less fruitful was his service (1789–94) as commandant of San Blas, an isolated, poorly supplied, and pestilential port on the west coast of Mexico and upon which the northern voyages depended.

It can be argued that the Spanish never possessed (and, even if they had, could never have mobilized) the resources needed to implement their policies along the Northwest Coast. The voyages launched from San Blas were few in number, brief in time, and scanty in achievements. The settlements at Nootka Bay and further south at Neah Bay did not flourish. The Nootka crisis had the paradoxical result of focusing British interest on the Northwest Coast and of creating from that moment onwards a feeling of legitimate claim to the area. The only clear legacy of the Spanish presence has been a number of place names, not all of them lasting (witness what was originally known as "Vancouver's and Quadra's Island"). Freeman Tovell is less interested in engaging with these larger issues than in examining in exhaustive detail – including five appendices, a chronology, and a glossary – the course of events. The book, exemplary in its layout and printing, has clearly been a labour of love for the author, witness the excellent illustrations (many in colour) that he has gathered over the years. Taken as a whole, Freeman Tovell's work is a notable addition to the history of British Columbia.

*Tsimshian Treasures: The
Remarkable Journey of the
Dundas Collection*

Donald Ellis, editor

Donald Ellis Gallery, Douglas
and McIntyre, and University of
Washington Press, 2007. 144 pp.
\$55.00 cloth.

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IN OCTOBER 1863, the Reverend Robert I. Dundas of Scotland travelled up the coast from Victoria to Old Metlakatla, near Prince Rupert. There, he acquired seventy-seven “ceremonial objects” from the Anglican evangelical lay minister William Duncan, who, in a radical effort to eradicate Native beliefs and customs, had established the utopian Christian community with his Tsimshian followers. This was a time of increasing missionary and governmental pressures on Aboriginal peoples to assimilate, marked also by the devastating effects of a major smallpox epidemic in 1862. Survivors had relinquished their treasures and ceremonial practices as part of the price of admission to Duncan’s religious order. It was an exchange of the carved manifestations of clan histories and privileges for the promise of more powerful cosmologies – and access to new economies – during a period of profound social change.

Dundas took his collection to Scotland, and it remained in the family for generations until his great-grandson, Simon Carey, put it up for auction at Sotheby’s, New York, in October 2006. Sold amid urgent negotiations by Canadian private collectors, public museums and galleries, art dealers, the federal government, and Tsimshian

leaders and cultural representatives, who collectively struggled to secure funds to “repatriate” the works to Canada, the now dismantled Dundas Collection fetched over US\$7 million and set a new auction record for historical Northwest Coast artifacts.

Less than a year after the auction, the sumptuous book *Tsimshian Treasures: The Remarkable Journey of the Dundas Collection* was published, edited by art dealer Donald Ellis with contributions by three former curators, a journalist, and a Tsimshian artist. The book accompanied a cross-Canada tour of the artifacts successfully purchased by Canadian individuals, dealers, and museums. Having already made a 150-year passage from “curio” to “national heritage,” the objects once again began their journey in traditional Tsimshian territory, this time at the request of the hereditary chiefs of the Allied Tsimshian tribes of Lax Kw’alaams and Metlakatla. The chiefs used this platform to celebrate their treasures’ real, if temporary, homecoming according to ceremonial protocol, bringing into focus values not encompassed by the market and pointing to the difference between rights of ownership and the privilege of possession.

Through both text and image, *Tsimshian Treasures* performs a similar entanglement of discourses, classifications, and ways of valuing. In the book’s introduction, Ellis describes his repeated attempts, as a dealer specializing in historical North American Indian art, to acquire the Dundas Collection in the decades preceding the Sotheby’s sale: “it was immediately apparent to me that this group of objects, with their rich history, belonged to Canada and all Canadians. They had to be returned” (13). Ellis went on to play a pivotal role in rallying Canadian buyers to purchase

the works at auction and in facilitating the exhibition and publication. Here we are introduced to the book's underlying and under-examined refrain: the importance of the collection as national patrimony. With the artifacts remaining out of the hands of contemporary Tsimshian people, however, debates over cultural property, market value, the institutionalization of Native heritage, and repatriation simmer beneath the celebratory rhetoric of homecoming and national belonging.

The history of the formation of the Dundas Collection, and the significance of these rare pieces to art historical and ethnological enquiry, is addressed in a series of essays by prominent experts in the field of Northwest Coast art: art historian Bill Holm, former Royal British Columbia Museum ethnology curator Alan Hoover, and researcher and former Seattle Art Museum curator Steven Brown. Holm points to the usefulness of the collection "in establishing the characteristics of northern British Columbia native art in the middle years of the 19th century" (16). Indeed, determining attributions of historical objects is an area of scholarship increasingly important not only to art historians but also to Aboriginal artists and communities striving to re-establish specific cultural styles and to identify heritage materials for repatriation. Hoover places the Dundas Collection within a context of historical collecting on the Northwest Coast, giving a detailed reconstruction of the circumstances surrounding the missionary's acquisition of these materials. He also mines anthropological and archival sources in order to link objects depicting inherited crests to specific chiefs and clans. His effort to place artifacts within indigenous histories of use and ownership is a worthwhile contribution to existing

studies of ethnological collecting, yet it lacks evident consultation with living clan members and cultural authorities. Brown, moreover, provides an object essay for each of the treasures highlighted in the book's full-colour photographs. Through meticulous observations on aesthetic details and how these speak to the skills of their now-anonymous makers, he guides readers towards seeing the range of works through a connoisseur's eyes. Again, the voices and perspectives of Tsimshian commentators could have helped readers to also see beyond the objects towards community-based understandings.

Particularly noteworthy in this volume are two essays that make a point of acknowledging the living culture, the authority of hereditary leaders, and the role of ceremonial practice today. Art critic Sarah Milroy offers a personal reflection on her journey to Prince Rupert for the opening of the exhibition. She situates the Dundas events within stories she encounters: the ongoing and complicated legacy of contact; the social and economic aspirations of both Native and non-Native residents; the "bittersweet moment" of the opening celebration, where James Bird, hereditary chief Txatkwak of Hartley Bay, spoke: "Today, all these things that we used every day are called artifacts. It seems strange to call them that" (33). Tsimshian weaver William White is given the book's last word in his contribution, "N'luumskm 'Amwaal: We Respect Our Treasures." He honours the Canadians who stepped forward to purchase the objects so that they could stay in this country as well as those who ensured that the treasures would be welcomed home according to Tsimshian protocol. "These pieces are our written history," he concludes, "created from the trees that still grow

on our land ... While looking at this collection of art, we are reminded of who we are and who we will become" (136-37).

Collections like the Tsimshian treasures gathered by Dundas are fragments of a larger whole that cannot, of course, ever be reassembled. But attempts to strengthen knowledge and build new connections between the historical objects and originating communities can help direct attention to the intersecting and often competing ways in which cultural heritage is meaningful today. To this end the compelling photographs by Shannon Mendes, taken at the exhibition opening at the Museum of Northern British Columbia, focus less on isolated masterpieces than on the people they captivate, the separation between the two enforced by the glass walls of display cases. (Regrettably, the individuals in the photographs, like their historical counterparts shown in Hoover's essay, are left unnamed.) But these treasures have crossed boundaries historically and are still doing so today. The histories and attributions given to the objects will continue to be debated by new generations of artists and researchers. Simultaneous claims of masterpiece and patrimony, and what is alienable and inalienable, will be argued about as the objects circulate through expanding art worlds. And books of this kind will remain market players themselves, adding value to the works they describe (and that may well resurface in international markets) while also shaping their fields of reception. *Tsimshian Treasures* is the lasting document of a remarkable collection that, like the artifacts now dispersed to new owners, takes its place in a journey not yet complete.

In Search of Canadian Political Culture

Nelson Wiseman

Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007. 348 pp. \$29.95 paper.

DENNIS PILON
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IN SEARCH OF CANADIAN *Political Culture* positions itself at the centre of debates over the nature of political culture in Canada, taking on disputes within what Alan Cairns would call the "sociological school" (behavioural versus historical), on the one hand, and between sociological and neo-institutional approaches, on the other. In doing so, the volume arguably represents the culmination of many strands of Wiseman's work since the early 1970s. The book is organized into ten chapters (excluding the introduction and conclusion), five of which explore larger paradigmatic debates about how to study political culture, and five of which explore Wiseman's own claims about Canada's regional political cultures. While claiming to provide just one perspective among many – and the book is so hemmed in by qualifications that its strong claims may be obscured – Wiseman ultimately argues that the search for Canadian political culture should take place at the regional level because there is no national political culture to be found. Furthermore, Wiseman argues that the lack of any unifying national culture in Canada should not be seen as a problem because, in his view, the country has produced fairly impressive political results just by muddling through. If anything, efforts to create some kind of unified national vision (e.g., Meech Lake or Charlottetown) or to reform

institutions to lay the groundwork for a new nationhood (either through mega-constitutional deal making or the reform of democratic institutions like the voting system) are either dangerous or useless. According to Wiseman, there is no problem that requires a national solution: the genius of Canadian politics is in its gradualist, pragmatic, and regional accommodation of difference.

Wiseman's book is rooted in 1960s-era debates over the nature of English-Canadian political culture. These were fuelled by the emergence of a distinctive Québécois identity in French Canada and American-inspired academic work that assumed few differences existed either within English Canada or between the political culture of the United States and that of English Canada. Arguably, the most important challenge to such views came from Gad Horowitz's interpretation of the Hartzian "fragment" thesis in the Canadian context. Horowitz argued that English Canada was predominantly a liberal fragment society, like the United States, but one that retained a "Tory touch." The loyalist Tory influences that remained in Canada, but not in the United States, explained for Horowitz the distinctive aspects of Canadian political culture, like the existence of a politically viable socialist party. Yet, as elegant and intuitively compelling as Horowitz's views seemed to be, particularly to the emerging English Canadian nationalist movement, too much of the discussion seemed abstract and lacking in evidence. This is where Wiseman came in – and his instincts were right – to ask what exploring the actual history of English-Canadian political culture might produce rather than just theorizing about it. Over the next decades, Wiseman would contribute to the debate in a host of

ways, offering critical commentary on rival approaches and breaking new ground with his own distinctive hybrid of Horowitz's take on the fragment thesis in Canada. This book brings these various contributions together under one cover for the first time.

Wiseman's contribution to the debate has two key prongs. First, he critically engages the behavioural school that dominates the study of political culture, demonstrating with a host of lucid examples just how problematic survey evidence can be. For instance, in 1997 the key Canadian academic election survey had 82 percent of respondents reporting that they had voted in the federal election, even though the actual voter turnout was only 67 percent. This gap – and there has been one like it for every election since such surveys began in 1965 – is clear evidence that surveys cannot be accepted as transparent reflections of public opinion. Indeed, this chapter of the book can – and should – be read as a stand-alone critique of the conceptual and explanatory over-reach of much of the behavioural literature. For anyone concerned about the use and abuse of polls in contemporary politics, Wiseman offers a great deal of valuable insight. His second contribution involves his own unique take on assessing the social factors animating Canadian political culture. Combining theoretical insights from Horowitz's take on the fragment thesis, S.M. Lipset's formative events thesis, and Harold Innis's staples thesis, Wiseman examines how successive waves of immigration established, maintained, or changed different regional political cultures. For instance, he argues that Alberta's political culture stands apart from that of the other Prairie provinces due to the higher number of Americans that immigrated to that province.

The attempt to cast the discussion of Canadian political culture as a historical development was a refreshing alternative to the ahistorical presentism of the behavioural school in the 1970s. But Wiseman did not – and still does not – go far enough in taking history seriously. Too often he appears to take the stereotypical differences between Americans and Canadians or Alberta and the rest of the west at face value, despite a considerable body of labour and social history from the 1970s on that challenges such views. What might be great insights from which to start (e.g., the higher levels of American immigration to Alberta) become reductionist labels that seem to prevent further inquiry (e.g., American = individualist, British = collectivist). Yet the work of Alvin Finkel, Peter Sinclair, and Edward Bell, among others, challenges these rather narrow and non-developmental readings of the long-serving Social Credit government in the province and Alberta's political culture. Indeed, in the 1944 election 25 percent of Alberta voters supported the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), while 5 percent cast their lot with the Communists – hardly the mark of a one-dimensional politics. While few would doubt the one-party-dominant tendencies in Alberta politics, Wiseman's post hoc reading of Alberta's one-sided election results loses an important dimension of the political conflict and contestation occurring there at different times.

Wiseman is also less than convincing in his treatment of institutions. Though early on he allows that institutions might influence political culture, his examples appear to suggest otherwise. Parliamentary government, federalism, the Charter – Wiseman sees them all as “embodiments” of Canadian political culture. The “cultural” aspect

is defended by implying that Canadians have somehow consented to these arrangements. Indeed, Wiseman explicitly argues this at one point: “The Constitution Canadians got was not imposed: it was what they negotiated among themselves and asked of Britain” (61). But who are the “Canadians” who sanctioned such arrangements in 1867? Given the highly restricted franchise, they were a very small group of wealthy white men, which means that our key institutional arrangements reflect, at best, an elite political culture, not one terribly well connected to Canadians more generally. Ironically, this theme is an area of strength for the behaviouralists, who have convincingly demonstrated that the public is largely ignorant of the working and origins of most Canadian governing institutions.

These criticisms point to a larger problem with the book – a less than systematic method. Indeed, the key example chosen to support his “regionalism as Canadian political culture” – provincial reaction to the Charlottetown Accord – seems a convenient one for Wiseman's purposes. One could draw on countless other examples to make a different case. For instance, José Igartua's recent book *The Other Quiet Revolution*, which focuses on various postwar struggles to establish a national English-Canadian identity, showcases a host of examples in which debates over Canadian political culture involving citizenship, the flag, and a Canadian national anthem did not break down regionally. How are we to assess such rival claims? Wiseman gives us little direction as his case appears to be built only on examples that support his view.

Specialists may also find various details in the book frustrating, given its broadly synthetic nature. As a voting

system specialist, it was frustrating for me to see chestnuts like “Canada’s inherited British institutional legacy provided for first-past-the-post, single member plurality” (78) when, in fact, the United Kingdom itself did not move decisively to single-member ridings until 1885, thirteen years after Confederation; or to see specious arguments defending our single member plurality system because “emerging democracies have looked to Canadian expertise in the conduct and rules of election” (79) when the author must know that not one of those emerging democracies has chosen to use our voting system. Provincial analysts may find some of his groupings curious, particularly his separation of British Columbia and Alberta from the rest of the west. The comparison of British Columbia’s party system with Australia’s seems particularly glib in a book on political culture, given that Catholicism was a key influence on the political culture of Australia’s Labour party whereas religion was not influential in the culture of the BC’s ccf.

In the end, *In Search of Canadian Political Culture* should be seen as a deeply conservative book in two important ways. One, it is seemingly locked into debates from the 1970s, despite a plethora of recent citations, as it does little to forward or expand on Wiseman’s initial contributions or include more recent debates (e.g., social capital, Benedict Anderson’s “imagined communities,” etc.). Two, and arguably more important, the book bears the marks of a kind of social democratic conservatism that Ralph Miliband once criticized the British Labour Party for. In *Parliamentary Socialism*, Miliband argues that Labour had come to fetishize parliamentary activity over all other kinds of political mobilization and, in the process,

had become the most conservative defender of institutional tradition in the United Kingdom. In a similar way, Wiseman’s complacent defence of the Canadian status quo, both its political culture and institutions, makes the same mistake, confusing form for substance. If Canadians have produced good political results – and Wiseman’s rosy view of our politics is hardly the consensus – it owes less to the factors he highlights and more to the specific nature of the historic political struggles themselves, something that can’t be read off political culture or institutions.

*Capital and Labour in the
British Columbia Forest
Industry, 1934-1974*

Gordon Hak

Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007. 272 pp.
\$29.95 paper.

ROGER HAYTER

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A FEW EXCEPTIONS ASIDE, the remarkable escalation of books that have investigated British Columbia’s forests and forest economy in recent years have not paid much attention to labour. Yet labour’s role is vital to the evolution of forest industries, labour helps define the limits to the power of capital, and labour’s interests are closely allied to regional and community development. Gordon Hak’s *Capital and Labour* is a timely, noteworthy contribution towards addressing these issues. The time period from the early 1930s to 1970s is well chosen. Employment and unionization in British Columbia’s forest industries grew rapidly and reached their zenith then, helping to shape British Columbia’s global role and

its differentiated but interdependent core-periphery structure. In recent decades, forestry employment and unions have fared less well within contemporary imperatives of flexibility that have confronted labour's hard-fought accommodations with capital, which are the focus of Hak's book.

By the early 1970s, British Columbia's forest industries were dominated by large-scale export-oriented commodity production, to an important degree controlled by large integrated firms, in large factories that employed unionized labour. Work routines were highly structured by province-wide collective bargaining between big business and big unions, a classic example of a so-called Fordist production system. Hak's (2) objective is to explain how the "work routines" achieved in collective bargains came about between the two central institutions of business and unions. The book begins with a lengthy quotation describing the work environment and typical work routines in a big pulp and paper mill. In practice, the heart of the book (chapters 3, 4, and 5) involves the detailing of the rise of unions, the nature of internal and inter-union politics, and the often tense roles of unions in linking labour with management in the "daily grind." The book also generally addresses the relationship between labour and technology (Chapter 6) and, less satisfactorily, the relationship between labour and environmentalism (Chapter 7). This latter chapter says little about labour, and environmentalism becomes much more important after the 1970s.

Hak's analysis is especially strong in revealing the murky, confrontational, and sometimes dirty politics involved in the formation of unions in the face of antagonistic employers and governments, in the equally complex politics among the unions themselves

as they competed for the hearts and minds of workers, and in their contradictory roles in dividing the economic pie with business through cooperation and opposition. As a historian, Hak is concerned about the issue of whether workers should have been more revolutionary in their approach to capital. His argument suggests not. As *Capital and Labour* demonstrates, workers understood the issues, the options to unionize or not, and which union leaders and ideologies to support. Workers faced tough moral choices in times of depression and both hot and cold wars, and their choices involved courage and self-sacrifice. In an institutional landscape, workers are neither simply factors of production nor dupes of capitalism and victims of liberal discourse. Rather, unions are a part of the discourse and for them (and society) collective bargaining was a landmark legal victory.

In its methodology, *Capital and Labour* leans towards the ideographic and a close attention to detail and immediate causation with respect to when events occurred and how they specifically unfolded. Thus, the discussion eschews the formal testing of hypotheses or the qualitative interrogation of a conceptual framework of the relationships between capital and labour. In effect, *Capital and Labour* provides a wealth of information to inform and qualify generalizations about unionism and labour practices in a way that allows readers to decide for themselves the implications for theory and advocacy. Moreover, *Capital and Labour* explicitly identifies broader issues through a useful discussion of the ideas of Fordism, the labour process, and discourse ideologies in a lengthy Introduction (for some reason not considered a chapter). Overviews of business history (Chapter 1) and

government policy (Chapter 2) in British Columbia's forest sector also precede the detailed examination of union history.

Hak adopts the widely used epithet of the "daily grind" to summarize the routines of work negotiated by unions. At the same time, between the 1930s and 1970s collective bargains in British Columbia's forest sector provided workers with dignity, stability, and democracy. In particular, the fundamental principles of seniority and job demarcation arrested arbitrary management practices and unhealthy competition among workers, and it transparently structured hiring, promotion, training, lay-offs, and rehiring. Structuring unions as "locals" also allowed for some local variation in negotiations (as well as contributing to their overall bureaucratic nature). Collective bargains contributed greatly to community identity. Business, it might be noted, gained much from gaining control over stable, specialized workforces in order to create productivity and profits, which, in turn, provided the basis for increasing wages and non-wage benefits to labour. By the 1970s, the forestry towns of British Columbia were rich communities.

In summary, *Capital and Labour* enriches understanding of unionism in a crucial period of labour history in British Columbia's forest sector. The book should be read, however, with broader objectives than it states in mind; in practice, it examines the history and politics of unionism as well as work routines. Union history (politics) and work routines are closely related but are not the same. More attention might have been given to how collective bargaining agreements actually structured the "conventions, routines and habits" of workers, notably with respect to types of workers (industry type, occupation,

gender, and location) and their daily routines and career paths, including the interruptions created by business cycles and technology change. These themes are mentioned, but less consistently than the history and politics of unionism. Bearing in mind that early chapters on business and government exclude labour, the book also takes some time before addressing its central concern.

Finally, as Gordon Hak recognizes, capitalism is a dynamic process, and recently the historical achievements of collective bargains have been threatened by technological changes, market dynamics, and recessions. In consequence, business has increasingly demanded flexible labour markets that threaten employment levels, not to mention the principles of seniority and job demarcation. Not surprisingly, this shift continues to be controversial. Should unions resist the imperatives of flexibility or seek to influence them? Gordon Hak's book is not simply valuable history: it also helps us to understand that flexibility is another profoundly difficult choice facing labour.



*The Story of Dunbar: Voices of a
Vancouver Neighbourhood*

Peggy Schofield, editor

Vancouver: Ronsdale Press, 2007.
442 pp. Illus. \$39.95 paper.

*The Ambitious City: A History of
the City of North Vancouver*

Warren Sommer

Madeira Park, BC: Harbour
Publishing, 2007. 342 pp. Illus.
\$44.95 cloth

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EACH OF THESE BOOKS contributes in important ways to the writing of the history of Greater Vancouver. Considered together they represent an interesting opportunity to compare different approaches to writing local history. Warren Sommer's *The Ambitious City: A History of the City of North Vancouver* was commissioned by the city to celebrate its centennial in 2007. By contrast, *The Story of Dunbar: Voices of a Vancouver Neighborhood* is a collaborative project undertaken by the Dunbar Residents' Association. Dedicated to the memory of its instigator, neighbourhood activist Peggy Schofield, its twelve chapters/essays were written by ten authors.

Sommer's book is a chronological narrative, a stem-to-stern history of the City of North Vancouver. The Dunbar book is less consistent in its organization. It is unclear if the chapters are meant to be stand-alone essays or chapters in a narrative. The first three chapters/essays follow the classic local

history formula, moving from First Peoples to early settlement and industry to community formation. Subsequent chapters/essays are more thematic, addressing topics such as education, the arts, the residential landscape, and Dunbar's natural history. There is some repetition of content among these chapters/essays. Neither book is lightweight; in fact both are a bit difficult to read while reclining in bed or on the sofa, reducing their appeal to the general interest reader. Both books benefit from good indexes and high production qualities. The illustrations in *The Ambitious City* are especially well chosen and beautifully reproduced.

Both books reflect the impulse to order and record past events and ways of living at a scale that can include Jane and Joe Average as individual actors rather than as lumpen masses or instructive examples. In doing so they pay homage to personal experience, to family, and to local community. Both books are much more inclusive, especially in terms of race, than local histories have traditionally been (but I'm still waiting for the queer history angle). In fact, both have engaged with members of the Squamish and Musqueam First Nations, albeit as informants rather than as collaborators, and have included their voices throughout the story. This means that, for example, both books explore the role of the Squamish and Musqueam as contemporary land developers. Likewise, the contributions of women and visible minorities are carefully tended to. The story of Chinese market gardeners on the Musqueam Reserve is an especially interesting example of this, and it illustrates how colonialism functioned locally, with one exploited group farming another's land and creating different racial spaces within the reserve. Neither book pretends that

such nastiness is ancient history; so, for example, in *The Ambitious City*, Doug Collins's "rants" in the *North Shore News* about immigration at least bear mentioning.

Laudable as inclusiveness is, both books suffer as a result. Parts of the *Story of Dunbar* are difficult to read because so much is included that the text is like an organized listing of names, dates, and achievements. It pays homage and might be a useful reference, but if your name is not there, or you do not know the people involved, it is not really very interesting. At this level, community history really is for the community or, even more narrowly, for those directly involved in the community. Sommer's book is also quite encyclopaedic, although he tends to be a bit more event- and phenomenon-driven than name-driven. Hampered by a strictly narrative and chronological approach, and in some chapters an over-reliance on newspaper sources, Sommer misses excellent opportunities to explore prewar community organizations or postwar youth hooliganism in some depth. Instead, these recurring phenomena are dealt with in isolated paragraphs, resulting in shallow and repetitive treatments. Design can and should be used to address some of these problems. In the case of the *Story of Dunbar*, subheadings and sidebars signal discrete subjects and unburden the text from some of its detail. Curiously, neither of these devices is used in *The Ambitious City*, although extended photograph captions are used to good effect. Ultimately, the *Story of Dunbar* achieves greater diversity, perhaps a product of its multiple authors, than does the *Ambitious City*. Both books contain excellent maps and are generally clearly and well written.

Detail is not all bad; used well it can bring focus and nuance to the narrative.

Informed by an astonishing number of interviews, *The Story of Dunbar* is especially good at evoking past ways of living by paying attention to the material world; this is a book that uses voices drawn from the interviews to take us inside middle-class domestic spaces of the mid-twentieth century, and it describes in rich detail what it was like to wash the dishes, hang out the laundry, and ride the streetcar. Changes in the urban environment, such as the switch to mercury vapour streetlights and the configuration of streetcar transfers, are lovingly described. On a lighter note, I've got to say that, after reading about Dunbar's successes in resisting group homes and even a housing cooperative, I was relieved to find out about the giant Highbury Tunnel, which carries much of the city's sewage under Dunbar to Iona Spit. It made me think that perhaps, after all, Dunbar does carry its share of the load.

We never really get inside the houses of North Vancouver in the way we do in Dunbar. Where Sommer is stronger is on the outside, in matters of land development (and its shadier practices) and wartime industry, both of which he deals with in some detail, using oral history quotations and booster literature quite effectively. Curiously, neither book addresses in any substantive way what it means to be either a suburban community in Canada or, specifically, a suburb of Vancouver. The relationship with Vancouver and its region is raised but never systematically probed in either book. There is an accessible literature on suburbs in Canada, including Richard Harris's well-written and quite short book *Creeping Conformity: How Canada Became Suburban, 1900-1960*. Whether you agree with Harris's argument or not, his book contains valuable information about the diversity of suburbs in Canada

and the significance of factors such as the changing structure of financing in shaping the suburban environment. Work like Harris's could be taken by local historians and used to sharpen their analysis, making it even more specific, more nuanced, and, ultimately, a lot more local.

Similarly, both books would have benefited from a bit more in the way of cliometrics, especially in relationship to class. For example, information about occupations in specific neighbourhoods or sub-neighbourhoods, at different times, would have added meaning to phrases such as "working class" and "middle class." As a public historian I am part of the audience for local history. These two books represent the better end of the spectrum, setting the bar high for other communities; but more argument and nuance, more critical dialogue with the academic literature, would certainly help me in my work as I try to contextualize the value of specific places within communities.

*The British Columbia Atlas of
Wellness*

L.T. Foster and C.P. Keller,
editors

Victoria: Western Geographical
Press, 2007. 235 pp. Maps. \$40.00
paper.

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MAPS AND ATLASES have acquired a mystique in the lore of public health since the publication of Dr. John Snow's famous cholera map of London in the mid-nineteenth century. Somewhere along the way, a

notion emerged that mapping disease events had led to major breakthroughs in understanding and containing communicable disease transmission. In practice, maps have rarely, if ever, achieved such heroic feats. More often they are employed, and at times manipulated, to make a point. Such was the case with Snow's map, which did not appear in his original and groundbreaking study of cholera but, instead, was added to the second edition in 1854 to reinforce his contention that cholera is a water-borne disease. In any case, maps have since become popular tools of communication for health practitioners, planners, and researchers, and atlases of disease and health outcomes continue to appear on a regular basis.

British Columbia has been the setting of a number of health atlases over the past two decades. These collections have now moved well beyond a preoccupation with illness and mortality to include such topics as the distribution of health care personnel and resources, variations in service utilization, and the mapping of social conditions known to influence health outcomes. Noteworthy examples include the two editions of *The BC Health Atlas*, which successfully integrate epidemiological methods, community health concepts, and cartographic techniques (McGrail and Schaub 2002; McGrail, Schaub, and Black 2004).

Into this crowded landscape enters the first edition of *The British Columbia Atlas of Wellness*. The work is co-edited by Leslie Foster, a veteran of the BC health atlas scene, and Peter Keller, who is internationally renowned for his work in cartography and geographic information systems. With contributions from a wide range of scholars and consultants, the *Atlas* contains more than 270 maps and over 120 indicators of

wellness. Chapter 1 outlines the goals of the *Atlas* and its origins as the progeny of the provincial government's ActNow BC initiative. Chapter 2 summarizes various definitions and dimensions of wellness from the literature. Chapter 3 offers information about data sources, tips for interpreting the maps and measures, and the obligatory cautionary notes about the data and mapping techniques employed. Chapter 4 provides an overview of diverse socio-demographic and physical geographic characteristics across the province. Maps of wellness indicators, the main attraction, are presented in the seven sections of Chapter 5, comprising approximately 150 of the book's 235 pages. The final chapter combines a number of the indicators in a series of summary maps intended to benchmark areas achieving "best wellness" (209) results.

The maps themselves are highly legible, technically sound, but by no means dazzling. All are printed in colour, although the choice of palette, ranging from forest green, representing the most positive results, to a clay red at the other end of the spectrum, may not appeal to everyone. Most employ Health Service Delivery Areas (HSDAs), the major administrative sub-units of the province's regional health boards, as the basic geographic unit of analysis. This selection was made primarily to enable the use of data from the 2005 cycle of Statistic Canada's Canadian Community Health Survey, whose sample sizes are too small to permit a more local level of analysis. While such a choice is understandable, the HSDAs are a tad large to serve as a basis for discussion about local-level action to promote wellness.

The *Atlas* provides a checklist menu of literature on the concept of wellness rather than a critical synthesis, and no

operational definition to guide the work is offered. In fact, there are some glaring discrepancies between the wellness dimensions listed in Chapter 2 and the indicators chosen to be mapped in Chapter 5. Why, for instance, are there no indicators of spiritual, occupational, and environmental wellness? In terms of the indicators selected, I felt there was too much emphasis on what public health practitioners refer to as modifiable health risks, such as smoking, diet, and exercise behaviour. This is clearly in deference to the priorities of the ActNow BC initiative, but I would prefer to see indicators chosen to meet conceptual criteria rather than policy direction. In this regard, the maps of "assets and determinants" (51-93) and "wellness outcomes" (185-208) were the most relevant to the subject at hand, and were effective in meeting the goal of providing readers with "food for thought to imagine the more dynamic aspects of everyday life that so profoundly shape the health and wellness experiences of populations" (19).

I found apparent contradictions in some of the results to be as intriguing as the cumulative summaries presented in Chapter 6. It was interesting, for instance, that non-metropolitan areas scored highest in measures of wellness *determinants*, such as social support, and sense of belongingness to the local community; yet many of these non-metropolitan areas scored the lowest in terms of wellness *outcomes*, such as being free of barriers to activities both inside and outside the home, and overall health utility. Perhaps consideration of, and discussion about, these and other findings will spur future advances in research, practice, and policy.

Overall, and in spite of its shortcomings and compromises, this work is a nice complement to earlier atlases of health

and disease in British Columbia. The content is highly accessible to the non-expert, and a conscientious reader should be able to make reasonable and cautious interpretations of the material, thanks to the helpful introductions and summaries provided. The *Atlas* is thus well positioned to serve as a platform for discussion about community-level wellness promotion, as it was intended to be. The book's affordable price of forty dollars and its availability for free download on the internet further reinforce the sincerity of this effort. While there are no life-saving discoveries to be found here, there is plenty of challenging information that may well lead to breakthrough dialogue and action.

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Liquid Gold: Energy Privatization in British Columbia

John Calvert

Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood Books, 2007. viii, 256 pp. \$24.95 paper.

MARK JACCARD
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JOHN CALVERT IS a professor of political science at Simon Fraser University, but this is not the kind of book one expects from an academic. It presents a conspiracy theory in which the sole purpose of electricity policy in British Columbia under Premier Gordon Campbell is to enrich corporate friends while impoverishing BC Hydro's small customers and destroying the environment. As with so many conspiracy books, facts and fair treatment of evidence are casualties right from page one.

Calvert claims that British Columbia's electricity policy, since the election of the Liberals in 2001, has been nothing more than the execution of a well-orchestrated conspiracy to (1) relinquish control of the BC electricity system to private independent power producers (IPPs), (2) enrich IPPs and major industries via subsidies to BC Hydro's industrial customers and unfair rate increases to its other customers, and (3) destroy the BC environment (if necessary) to achieve these ends. To sell his conspiracy theory, Calvert is extremely biased in his selection and interpretation of the evidence. One could provide a huge list of his distortions, but space constraints limit me to the following examples.

Calvert claims that government and industry have conspired to define

biomass (wood waste) as not being a fossil fuel so that they can increase greenhouse gas emissions without admitting it. Thus, he says, “the government left open the door to fossil fuel burning through its acceptance of the use of ‘biomass’ (a term coined by industry to make burning wood seem relatively benign) to generate electricity” (12). He then he adds up energy projects from coal (28 percent) and biomass (18 percent) in the 2006 IPP contract offers from BC Hydro and concludes: “In other words, power plants burning fossil fuels accounted for roughly 46 percent of the total” (62). In reality, biomass is not a fossil fuel and the term is not an industry fabrication that was composed in order to burn fossil fuels under another guise.

Calvert conveniently confuses the terms “electricity” and “energy.” The book is about increasing private “electricity” generation, but its subtitle is “Energy Privatization in British Columbia.” In fact, the entire BC energy system is mostly in private ownership and always has been. The BC electricity system, however, is 90 percent in public ownership and, after two decades of Calvert’s “privatization conspiracy,” this may decline by a whopping 5 to 10 percent.

Calvert claims that “it is no exaggeration to say the BC Utilities Commission has become a kind of ‘club’ in which private interests have shaped the regulatory process in their favour” (33). As evidence, he refers to the “millions of dollars over the years” awarded in intervener funding to IPPs and industrial customers, and he concludes that “in reality the major beneficiaries are not members of the public at all: they are corporate interests” (32). Not true. For the past decade, data from the commission show that the “major beneficiaries” were unions,

consumer groups, environmentalists, and other small non-profits, at 73 percent of British Columbia Utilities Commission funding, while industrial customers and IPPs received only 27 percent.

The BC Heritage Contract entitles BC Hydro customers to low-cost power from its older hydropower facilities. Calvert claims that “the prime beneficiaries of the Heritage Contract have been major industrial customers” (5). Not true. Industrial customers receive only one-third of the benefit. The “prime beneficiaries” are the small-consumer customer classes together; namely, households, small businesses, institutions, farmers, and municipal governments.

Calvert frequently speaks of the unfairness of large industrial customers paying lower rates than other customers. He conveniently fails to explain that industrial customers pay less everywhere in the world because the cost of serving them is dramatically lower; unlike residential customers, industrials have no-low voltage distribution costs and a smooth load that does not require expensive extra capacity to meet peak demand.

Calvert presents a figure that demonstrates “the growth of private energy investments since the Liberals were elected in 2001” (55). First, the figure is wrong. More IPP capacity was added under the NDP in the 1990s than his figure shows. Second, Calvert conveniently fails to point out that almost half of the 1,000 MW of IPP capacity installed since 2000 was from projects approved by the NDP. And Calvert should explain that this trend to IPPs is global, as governments across the political spectrum realize the value in sharing electricity investment risks with private investors. The likely outcome is lower long-run rates for all

BC Hydro customers as independent investors absorb misinvestment losses. BC Hydro ratepayers would thus have avoided losses like the \$120 million from BC Hydro's ill-conceived Vancouver Island natural gas strategy and the even larger sum wasted on the aborted Site C dam in the 1980s.

Calvert claims that "one of the other major consequences of the government's new energy policy is its negative impact on the provincial environment" (11). He says that the Liberal's Energy Plan in 2002, with its 50 percent requirement that energy be from clean sources, "opened the door to the purchase of new energy from pulp mills that use wood waste and coal" (47). This is wrong. Before the government established the 50 percent requirement, BC Hydro's policy under the NDP was that 10 percent of its electricity must come from clean sources. In other words, 90 percent could have come from burning coal. The 2002 Energy Plan partly closed a door that was wide open. The 2007 plan basically shut it with a requirement for 90 percent clean.

If you love conspiracy theories, enjoy sanctimonious, inaccurate criticisms of policy crafted to stimulate righteous indignation against our politicians, and don't care about facts and fair treatment of evidence, this is just the book for you.



*Coasts under Stress:
Restructuring and Social-
Ecological Health*

Rosemary E. Ommer with the
Coasts under Stress Research
Project Team

Montreal and Kingston: McGill-
Queen's University Press, 2008. 574
pp. \$34.95 paper.

TRACY SUMMERVILLE
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Columbia*

RESILIENCE. THIS IS a word that, for me, conjures up a feeling of hard times met with bald-faced determination to get through whatever comes one's way. *Coasts under Stress* brings this idea to life through its examination of the threatened and fragile ecosystems of Canada's east and west coasts. There is a lot to say about this book: conceptually, it tackles its research question on different scales (temporal, spatial), which reminds us that we are part of a long human and biological history; methodologically, it asks the reader to avoid disciplinary bias and to look through the lenses of a range of actors in both the human and biological worlds; substantively, it asks us to see these communities as resilient in their efforts to restructure and as microcosms of larger cities in which the deep connectedness between humans and their environments might not be so obvious. This is a tall order for both the reader and the research team, but I think it succeeds.

The research question asks, "What can be done to stem the crisis of rural community decline?" Ommer et al. argue that, in order to answer this question, it is imperative to understand

what the decline is about. How did we get to a place where ecological health and human health are suffering, considering that both the east and west coasts have traditionally been places of resource wealth and abundance? At first glance, it seems that the researchers conceptualized two jigsaw puzzles: they would piece together secondary and primary research across a range of disciplines and put them together to create two pictures, one of each coast, and then they would compare the experiences to determine better paths for governing the restructuring of these human and biological communities. Their approach is compelling because it recognizes that these puzzles are not one-dimensional static pictures but, rather, that they tell the story of resilience and restructuring over long periods of time: ecological restructuring has to be measured differently than human community restructuring, and yet the two are inextricably linked. The authorship of the book makes it clear that these puzzles need to be constructed by a large interdisciplinary team capable of collegiality, cross-fertilization of ideas, and willingness to move away from the kind of jargon that sometimes halts fruitful collaboration. The result is a picture more like one of those fantastic 3-D puzzles whose construction eludes most of us.

The book is divided into three sections. For reasons of space, I follow the issue of the fishing industry, although the team covers other renewable resources (forestry) as well as non-renewable resources (mining and oil and gas). What is so interesting is that it appears that, in this restructuring process, even our idea of which resources are renewable may have to change. The first section covers the history of the restructuring of resources in coastal communities. The chapter entitled

“Not Managing for Scarcity” captures most clearly the essence of this first section. It seems impossible to believe that the fishing industry on both coasts could be in such dire crisis, and yet it appears that abundance allowed for capitalism and technological advances (if they can be called that) to create a context for gross mismanagement. The authors demonstrate that the degradation of marine systems, which has resulted from many variables – including more invasive fishing techniques, policy changes, lack of communication between policy makers and fishers, and other issues – has had a quite sudden and alarming impact on both coasts. In the second part of the book, the authors look at how these changes have affected human socio-economic, physical, and mental health. In the simplest terms, Canada’s health care system is in crisis, but in rural and remote communities, stresses are exacerbated by declining populations (particularly the out-migration of youth), the loss of jobs, and the loss of local food sources. Both coasts have experienced drastic stock reductions, which have led to a reduced numbers of fishers and processing plants.

So what is to be done? Section 3 lays out some possible solutions and potential issues for guiding the restructuring process. I found the discussion of the aquaculture industry most informative. It seems that aquaculture is not new; what *is* new is treating aquaculture as an industry. Industrialization has come as a result of seeing aquaculture as a method of diversification. Governments, Ommer et al. argue, are attracted to this model of economic growth and so have regulated and subsidized this new industry. In British Columbia, the authors point out, aquaculture once sustained a number of family farms but is now dominated by “eleven producers,

of which five multinationals control 81 percent of production” (330). Much of the technology and expertise regarding aquaculture has come from Norway, but this exogenous knowledge does not always fit the new environment: the introduction of Atlantic salmon, for example, has raised a number of worrisome issues (330). Aquaculture is but one area in which science, traditional knowledge, and public policy need to be integrated.

Here is where I found it difficult not to wear my disciplinary hat. As a political scientist, I thought that the most compelling aspects of the book were the policy and governance implications of the findings. Most interesting was the idea that neither more nor less government was the answer but, rather, more collaborative governance. The crisis in the fishing industry is most illustrative of this point. Across time and space, decisions have been made in a context of imperfect knowledge; it was imperfect because knowledge-sharing was exclusive and not inclusive. Scientific modelling was favoured over traditional knowledge, economy over ecology, one species over another, dependence over diversification. And while it will always be true that knowledge will be imperfect, Ommer et al. conclude that “co-management and stewardship is an essential component in finding the best way forward” (447). It may be that these communities will have to restructure their economies and identities, and while they have already shown great resilience, they cannot succeed without the leadership of good governance.

This book challenges the traditional model of Canadian federalism. The politics of identity, province-building, and outdated jurisdictional divisions must be challenged. Ommer et al. see coastal communities as laying bare the

challenges of economic, ecological, and community restructuring that will come to all global communities as we face issues of sustainability. Peak oil predictions, climate change, and environmental degradation remind us that our way of life will be challenged and, most likely, restructured.

Coasts under Stress will be most useful in graduate-level courses in health, planning, political science, biology, and other areas that look at the connections between human and ecological health and policy. It is written clearly, grounded in the literature, methodologically sound, critical of itself, and thought-provoking.

Basking Sharks: The Slaughter of BC's Gentle Giants

Scott Wallace and Brian
Gisborne

Vancouver: New Star Books, 2006.
92 pp. \$19.00 paper.

*Whales and Dolphins of the
North American Pacific
including Seals and other
Marine Mammals*

Graeme Cresswell, Dylan
Walker, and Todd Pusser

Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Pub-
lishing, 2007. 216 pp. Maps, illus.
\$21.95 paper.

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SHARKS AND MARINE mammals are charismatic and have captivated people for centuries. People have

regarded them with sentiments ranging from reverence to repugnance. Historically, our principal motivations towards these creatures were financial and fatal. They were hunted for their furs, their fats, and their internal body organs. They were hunted because we wanted the fish they ate, or at least the fish we thought they ate. They were hunted for sport just because they were there. Fortunately, in the eastern north Pacific, many species are now valued for their existence, not their demise. Though these beings are still sought after, nowadays the ultimate reward is simply a sighting – perhaps with a photograph.

These two books are superb additions to the marine natural history literature. Though both pertain to the Pacific waters of North America, the former is limited to British Columbia. *Whales and Dolphins of the North American Pacific* is a valuable tool for any wildlife enthusiast interested in finding, observing, and photographing wild marine mammals. *Basking Sharks: The Slaughter of BC's Gentle Giants* recounts an appalling time in BC history – a time that must never be forgotten, lest history repeat itself.

In *Basking Sharks*, Wallace and Gisborne draw upon global knowledge of basking shark biology, ecology, and exploitation and succinctly connect the details to coastal British Columbia. The authors present an informative account of the history of basking sharks by distilling sightings records dating from 1791 (29). To elucidate the pre-slaughter provincial distribution, they incorporate accounts from eighteenth-century trade vessels (29), the Hudson's Bay Company (30), British naval vessels (30), anthropologists (31), and historians (31-35).

The social and governmental outlooks that synergistically fuelled a collective

hatred of these plankton-eating sharks is comprehensively provided. Wallace and Gisborne recount the early twentieth-century attitudes that culminated in their almost certain extirpation. Interesting newspaper and magazine articles from around the province supplement the historical narrative. Portrayed as monsters, basking sharks were slaughtered by the government and public alike. This was truly a low point in our coastal history. Given that there have been only three confirmed sightings of these sharks in BC waters since 1994 (63), it appears that eradication efforts have been the epitome of efficiency. With the current lack of federal protection and/or recovery efforts, government cuts, sensational headlines, and social repugnance may have sealed the fate of British Columbia's gentle giants. Potentially compounding factors, such as California fisheries (63) and natural environmental fluctuations (65), are briefly discussed in the final chapter. However, the conclusions remain unchanged. As such, the consequences of human actions that were based on irrational loathing and ignorance make it embarrassing to claim membership in a society that could behave in such a manner. This book is well written, and the presentation makes it difficult to put down, even in light of its disheartening content. The historical attitudes and actions of British Columbians are expertly framed within a global context, highlighting the immediate need for cohesive conservation-based management of elasmobranch fish and fisheries.

As many species presented in *Whales and Dolphins* were once considered commercial commodities, the post-hunting conservation successes and failures are evident through the examination of species details and

distribution maps. For some, such as the gray whale (78), whose current range extends from the Bering Sea to Baja California, extinction was almost certain before protection from hunting was enacted in 1946 (80). Fortunately, extinction was staved off, and the modern population is such that communities in Mexico (179), California (180), Washington (180), and British Columbia (180) have become whale watch destinations for this once rare mammal.

Whales and Dolphins is one of the finest marine mammal field guides available for this region as it includes not just whales and dolphins but all other marine mammals, including porpoises, seals, sea lions, and sea otters. Comparative illustrations are provided to ensure ease in identifying classifying characteristics. One of the most striking aspects of this book is the integration of extensive biological and ecological information with full-page colour images for each species, including those that are most rare. Cresswell, Walker, and Pusser offer recommendations for finding, identifying, documenting, and observing wild marine mammals. And they have included other practical suggestions, such as how to choose a whale watch operator (15), a description of sea states (18), an equipment checklist (19), and advice for taking photographs and video footage (20-22). These are excellent additions that are rarely offered in field guides, and they make this book supremely useful.

The narrative descriptions of surface behaviours, accompanied by photographs of spouts (or blows), dorsal fins, and tail flukes, are excellent. Moreover, the species-specific behaviours, such as the tool usage of sea otters (50) and the surfacing patterns of whales (36-41), are also illustrated with photographs and

collectively contribute to the superior nature of this field book.

The authors of *Whales and Dolphins* include schematic maps of the west coast of North America, with a colour-coded key to indicate the relative seasonal sighting probability for each species. The novice may find this overwhelming and difficult to relate to specific localities, but the experienced marine mammal observer will appreciate the inclusion of rare species such as the ginkgo-toothed beaked whale (114). *Whales and Dolphins* is a functional, well-written, and easy-to-use field guide. The general and species-specific information is cohesive, allowing one either to read the book from cover to cover or simply to focus on a particular section. The authors have succeeded in producing a compact and informative field guide.

Both of these books are significant contributions to coastal BC literature on the once hunted, charismatic marine species, with *Whales and Dolphins* being required reading for all fisheries students and government managers.