

## BOOK REVIEWS

Anderson, Kim. *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood*. Toronto: Second Story Press. 2000. ISBN 1-896764-27-4, CDN\$16.95.

Kim Anderson, a Cree/Métis writer and educator, explains the title of her book as "There comes a point in the definition of Aboriginal womanhood where we must make sense of how ancestral traditions can fit into our modern lives. This is the "re-cognitive" part of our *recognition of being*, the part where we actively construct modern Native female identities" (193). Likewise one of the four steps in a process of self-definition is outlined as "*resist, reclaim, construct and act*" (15). The documentation of this process forms the main part of the book. The impact of colonization in contrast is summarized in one chapter as mere background. While acknowledging the violence and confusion of the past and the present, her focus is on "strength, power and beauty of Native womanhood" (14). She further emphasizes her de-colonizing approach by illustrating "an Aboriginal method contextualizing knowledge" (21) which validates the oral knowledge of Native communities. While including written work on her topic (as indicated in her comprehensive bibliography), she mostly refers to her interviews with forty Aboriginal women (listed with brief biographical sketches at the end of the book) representing a wide cross section of Indigenous nations. Included among them are well-known writers and scholars like Lee Maracle, Jeannette Armstrong, Emma LaRocque, Maria Campbell, and Marlene Brant Castellano.

Anderson's investigation into different ways of reconstructing Native womanhood does not offer definitions of the *role* of Native women today but explores a recognition of *being*, explained as "an on going exercise" (Preface). Rather than offering answers she draws her readers into a process which continues beyond the book. Her primary audience may be female Native readers, but any reader concerned about response-ability is challenged to answer her question: "What will you do with the knowledge you have gained?" (49).

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Dempsey, Hugh A. *Firewater: The Impact of the Whisky Trade on the Blackfoot Nation*. Calgary: Fifth House Ltd., 2002, 248 pp., illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 1-894004-96-5, Paper CND\$24.95.

*Firewater* is an examination of the illicit trade in alcohol with the Blackfoot Nation from 1869-70 to 1875-6. Dempsey ably records the details of the trade from its initial days until its decline under the combined forces of US and Canadian law as well as the disappearance of the buffalo. Unfortunately, Dempsey's story most often follows only the traders. In his final chapter, for example, he traces what became of the whiskey traders in detail, giving the Blackfoot Nation only a small paragraph. It would have been beneficial to see what became of the chiefs or even 'lesser' Natives who appear throughout the text and managed to survive the whiskey years. Nevertheless, while Dempsey does not attempt to calculate the loss of human life, the death and destruction which resulted from the whiskey trade, they form a significant portion of the narrative. Similarly, although Dempsey does not expressly set out to show the multicultural nature of the trade, it is obvious that dozens of Métis, Blacks, Whites (American and Canadian), and Indians sold whiskey to the Blackfoot. The book also demonstrates the lack of government will on both sides of the border to halt the trade until the sheer brutalization and demoralization of an entire Nation could no longer be dismissed. Coincidentally, the governments, both Canadian and American, only took active and effective steps to suppress the trade once the buffalo had largely disappeared and the whiskey trade thereby rendered non-viable. The monograph's underlying narrative demonstrates that the sheer numbers of buffalo skins being shipped to the US from Canadian territory, 40,000 hides in 1872 alone, were only possible through the Blackfoot Nation's willing participation in the slaughter of vast herds to obtain whiskey. Dempsey traces how the Blackfoot Nations as a result became weaker, numerically and socially, and unable to protect its lands effectively against encroaching governments and settlers. Overall this is a sad, but excellent testimonial of the whiskey trade's impact upon the Blackfoot Nation.

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Hawker, Ronald, W. *Tales of Ghosts: First Nations Art in British Columbia, 1922-61*. Vancouver: UBC Press, ISBN 0-7748-0954-X, CDN.

Few Ph.D dissertations are of a caliber to be published, but *Tales of Ghosts* is an exception. The book is a revised version of Ronald Hawker's doctoral dissertation, which was completed at the University of British Columbia in 1998. The book is not only a sterling contribution to art history, but also an unique window to better understanding First Nations people from 1922-1961. Those years were repressive ones, 1922 being the year that the participants of the Cranmer potlatch were charged with violating the Indian Act. Yet, Hawker shows that the Canadian government possessed an inconsistent approach to history. On the one hand, the erection of totem-poles was prohibited; on the other, efforts to preserve them were undertaken. Such dualism, of course, is associated with what the World Health Organization's *World Report on Violence and Health* (2002) called, "The enormous social and cultural turmoil created by the policies of colonialism." West Coast art was—and is—an expression of its people. Hawker elucidates this expression within its social, political, and larger cultural contexts.

The book has abundant illustrations. My favourite is the mysterious totem poles in Stanley Park (the originals, of course). These totems, the first by Charlie James, are deeply carved. Hawker presents the archival data of the survival of James and all West Coast artists, too many to name one more. The book, however, is not only for the art historian or anthropologist, but also for those interested in First Nations generally or First Nations Art in British Columbia specifically. To those who resonate to this art, this book is for us. The reader will not be disappointed.

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Loew, Patty. *Indian Nations of Wisconsin: Histories of Endurance and Renewal*. Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2001, ix-xii, 148 pp., illustrations, maps, bibliography, index, ISBN 0-87020-332-0, Paper CDN\$29.61.

*Indian Nations of Wisconsin* is an examination from a Native perspective of how Wisconsin's Indian Nations suffered and are still fighting to overcome injustice. Loew, a member of the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Ojibwe, does not claim her work to be an exhaustive tribal history, but instead sees it as an attempt to describe Wisconsin's Native heritage. Because she wants to educate the public and celebrate Native American survival, scholars should not be surprised by her limited use of footnotes. Although not adhering to 'academic standards,' Loew successfully highlights for a general audience how Native People in Wisconsin, despite American assimilationist policies, creatively and consistently exerted their right to exist as unique cultures.

Loew limits her examination to the 12 Nations—Ho-chunk, Menominee, Potawatomi, Oneida, Mohican, Brothertown, and six bands of Ojibwe—that have maintained a continuous residence in Wisconsin since its pre-statehood days. The initial chapters examine early history (pre-contact) and initial encounters with the Europeans, while the remaining chapters present compact tribal histories. Her conclusions, based on recent developments and economic initiatives, are hopeful, but they highlight the need for continued vigilance to ensure the survival of Native communities, protection of Native rights, and cultivation of a positive relationship with non-Native society.

The book is based on Loew's doctoral research, various course lectures, as well as interviews with tribal historians, linguists, and elders. By making extensive use of Native sources, such as recorded speeches, origin stories, songs, legends, cave paintings, newspapers, and participant interviews, the book admirably brings Aboriginal voices to the fore. Unfortunately, Loew's comments on sources fail to indicate that many of the recorded speeches such as those associated with treaty negotiations, were made by non-Natives. This can potentially lead the reader to assume that her sources are purely Native in origin and not filtered through another's cultural sense. There are also minor factual errors, such as her assertion that the French constructed the fort on Mackinaw Island when in fact it was established by the English. Nevertheless, these errors are inconsequential and do not detract from the main purpose of the book. Hence, Loew does an admirable job narrating history from an Aboriginal perspective and sets a standard for 'popular histories' of Indian Nations.

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