

## BOOK REVIEWS

Belanger, Yale D., *Gambling with the Future: The Evolution of Aboriginal Gambling in Canada*. Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 2006, 232 pp. ISBN 9781895830286 \$31.00.

Yale Belanger's *Gambling with the Future: The Evolution of Aboriginal Gambling in Canada* is an overview of gaming from the 1700s to recent times. Placing it in a particular academic discipline is difficult: it is clearly an effective analysis of the history of Aboriginal gaming in North America, but also a cross disciplinary work equally at home as a cultural studies document. Ultimately, for me, it serves as an effective business studies text framing a chronology and informing the challenges of risk management. The book follows a logical and sequential process beginning with an assessment of gaming in Aboriginal communities in the 18th and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. He cites sources to document the differences in gaming between European and Aboriginal cultures, although in some ways the similarities are just as startling.

Many Aboriginal cultures used sport, games and wagering as a means to bridge differences which would have otherwise resulted in bloodshed. Trade and cultural relationships thus were established between groups. Belanger confirms that in Aboriginal cultures, gaming was at once secular and religious whereas in European cultures it was essentially secular. As a business model, the link between secular and religious creates long-term commitments between groups, minimizing the effects of individual ambition and short-term profit on decision-making.

Belanger also explains the rationale for the development of casinos in the last 25 years as a potential economic engine in Aboriginal communities. He traces the differences in experience in Canada and the United States and points out that regardless of the province or state, gaming is not a cash cow. Gaming is a high-risk venture that may or may not stimulate other economic development, and it can lose large volumes of money if not managed as an accountable and transparent enterprise. When it fails, gaming does great harm to the community.

This spring I attended several meetings at an Aboriginal casino in Edmonton. The casino, hotel and conference centre employ over 500 people from around the world. They are very aware of the mission statement of the venture, and the Chief of the band council is a very visible presence. All of the people I met had a sense of purpose that goes beyond the enterprise, for it was evident they believe they are part of something bigger than themselves, and they understand there is a relationship between opportunity and responsibility. This, I think is what Belanger is writing about. This venture is the beginning of a much larger agenda, an agenda which Belanger explains historically and culturally. When it works, the traditional indigenous gaming model stimulates cultural growth. Communities share with one another and enjoy long-term sustainability that is not otherwise possible.

More Aboriginal communities will embrace gaming this century as a means to stimulate their economy and establish greater autonomy. Belanger's work articulates the challenge for these Aboriginal communities: if they follow their historical and cultural traditions and use gaming as an opportunity to invest in infrastructure and other businesses to diversify their respective economies, it may just work. Communities that take a shorter view, however, will undoubtedly suffer.

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Bird, Louis. *Telling Our Stories: Omushkego Legends & Histories from Hudson Bay*, J. S. H. Brown, P. W. DePasquate, M. F. Ruml, (Editors). Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2005.

Louis Bird will be talked about for seven generations to come, as the one who took on the responsibility to preserve the oral stories, legends and the history of the Omushkegowak. This book is necessary reading for anyone who has a keen interest in the traditional knowledge of the Aboriginal peoples of North America. Whether an anthropologist, historian, social scientist, researcher or an Aboriginal person, the reader will be fascinated by the knowledge, wisdom and storytelling prowess of Louis Bird.

*Telling Our Stories* preserves the integrity and inherent storytelling qualities of Bird's dialogues. One seems to hear the words as they pour

from his lips. As he transports his reader to the settings and locales that he talks about, the characters in his stories come alive. He is indeed a gifted storyteller. He reminds me of my grandfather who had the same ability to carry his audience upon his words to a time long past, but not forgotten.

The worldview and values of the Omushkegowak are presented by one of their own, as it should be, so that there is not misinterpretation or misunderstanding of the material. *Telling Our Stories* is the culmination of decades of gathering, researching and taping of the Omushkegowak Elders and leaders by a conscientious and committed member of their community. Bird believes that Aboriginal languages must be preserved, and he walks his talk. He has committed the stories, history, and cultural values to paper with this book and he will be celebrated as a great Omushkegowak who had the foresight to go to the ancestors for their wisdom for the generations to come. His is a significant contribution to Aboriginal traditional knowledge in general, and Omushkegowak traditional knowledge in particular.

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Clark, Ella E. (Editor), *Indian Legends of the Pacific Northwest*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003, 225 pp.

*Indian Legends of the Pacific Northwest* is a collection of stories accumulated during the editor's travels in the Pacific Northwest of the United States. Clark, a Professor Emerita of English at Washington State University, began collecting legends while she was a fire lookout in the Cascade Mountains. These stories focus primarily on creationism and the landscape. The book is divided into five sections: myths, legends and tales of the mountains, lakes, rivers creation and the sky.

The texts included in this collection have been transcribed from original oral narratives. Usually a short introduction precedes the tale to contextualize it. These legends are full of life and provide a brief window into the culture which created them.

Overall, this book is interesting and sincere in its portrayal. It is an excellent collection that should be of interest to both academics and

non-academics alike, especially those interested in mythology and folklore.

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Hymes, Dell. *Now I Know Only So Far: Essays in Ethnopoetics*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003, 512 pp. ISBN 0-8032-7335-5 Paper \$29.95.

Ethnopoetics has at least two lives. The first animates the creative response of artists to the art of non-literate cultures, and is a particularly powerful engagement in avant-garde circles. The second, a well-established specialization within linguistic anthropology, encompasses the analysis and interpretation of narrative and poetic expression in oral cultures.

Over a period of many years, Dell Hymes has made a defining contribution to anthropological linguistics. Now an *emeritus* of the University of Virginia, having previously taught at Pennsylvania, Berkeley and Harvard, he has amassed a lifetime's work of significant intellectual reach. His thinking extends forward from Boas, enriched especially by Habermas, to open the study of oral narrative to an appreciation of its expressive-stylistic and aesthetic. Hymes' insight that language patterns are in some measure determinative for thought patterns, has formed a significant component of the response to Chomsky over the years.

*Now I Only Know So Far* is a compilation of previously published articles dealing largely with the oral culture of the Chinookan peoples of the northwest. Remarkably consistent as a body of work, the collection ranges across a breadth of topics. These include narrative as instruction, information, entertainment, art, the creative role of the storyteller, narrative structure (including an especially fascinating discussion of patterning, proportionalism and gender), the expressive function of verse structures, and the conversion from the oral to the written.

Hymes' scholarship is uncompromising in intellectual purpose, but also deeply appealing. Exercising an exacting analytical discipline, his examination of Aboriginal narrative is systematic and intensely detailed. He defines narrative and poetic structure not as a phenomenon or

schema, but as a source of coherence and expression. In so doing he has marked the path for the non-Native reader to discover the power, humour, and humanity of this treasure trove of art and sophistication.

Given that no distinction is made in Chinookan (and many Native) traditions between poetic expression and song, it is surprising that Hymes has not looked more closely at musical grammar and performance traditions as fundamental for the understanding of verse structure. Otherwise, this is a valuable summary statement from a major scholar in the field.

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Kroeber, Karl and Clifton Kroeber (Eds.) *Ishi in Three Centuries*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003, 415 pp. ISBN 0-8032-2757-4 \$49.95.

For those who were undergraduates in the 60s, *Ishi* is one of those words that continues to elicit strong, emotional response. Theodora Kroeber's *Ishi in Two Worlds*, first published in 1961, was quickly accepted as a defining text for young and progressive White Americans. It injected a new and vital thread in the discourse of political discontent spanning the years from the Civil Rights Movement, the Kennedy and King assassinations, and the Peace Movement, to Wounded Knee and beyond. Both Natives and Whites, especially the young, were galvanized politically by the heartbreaking story of a Native American – the last Yahi, who, hunted, exhausted and starving, came out of hiding in Oroville, California in 1911 to live the remainder of his life, a scant four years and seven months, at the Anthropological Museum of the University of California in San Francisco. Theodora's husband, Alfred Kroeber, a student of Franz Boas, was Chair of the Department of Anthropology and Director of the recently established Museum. While Theodora Kroeber's book was hardly political in intent, it is hard to imagine that it did not inspire somehow the emergence of a new awareness of the Native American tragedy, an awareness that was to lead directly to the American Indian Movement. After *Ishi*, ignorance and inaction ceased to be options.

*Ishi's* story also spawned an industry that includes amongst its prod-

ucts, novels, plays, and TV dramas.<sup>1</sup> In the zeal to serve market priorities, portrayals of Ishi stray quite far from the person whom Alfred Kroeber described as having “lived out his life in a manner that contradicts the victimizing myth of the vanishing American Indian.”<sup>2</sup> His story has also sparked intense debate within the academy in response to particularly the passage of the North American Graves and Repatriation Act of 1990, and the 1999 discovery that Ishi’s brain had been autopsied and removed to the Smithsonian under Kroeber’s authority in 1916. The sometimes rancorous debate is driven not only by ethical issues surrounding the iconic Ishi (not to speak of the iconic anthropologist) and the repatriation of his remains, and renewed discussion about the conduct and purposes of anthropology, but also by the *de rigueur* politics and opportunism that bedevil university affairs. It is in this context that *Ishi in Three Centuries* emerges as a compendious, remarkably fair-minded documentation of all major aspects of current Ishi research and an admirably even-handed airing of issues that animate the debate.

What is so exceptional, though, is that the book is edited by Alfred and Theodora’s two sons, Karl and Clifton Kroeber: Karl a professor of Humanities at Columbia, and Clifton a professor of Hispanic American history at Occidental. Much of the writing is critical of the work of both of their parents. They nonetheless had the grace to include such critical essays, thereby ensuring a truly global view of the subject. It is organized in five sections: Ishi in San Francisco, the repatriation controversy, Ishi’s world revisited, Ishi’s stories, and Ishi as inspiration. Each contains from three to six essays covering an enormous breadth of material.

Part I covers the vast territory from Jace Weaver’s elucidation of parallels between the captivity of Ishi and other Native people put on display as exhibits, to Grace Wilson Buzaljko’s presentation of the Kroebers’ colleagues at the Museum. Of particular note in Part II is a fierce statement from Nancy Scheper-Hughes, a member of the Berkeley Anthropology Department valorizing an anthropology of political engagement whose first priority must be advocacy. As well, it includes an elegant article by Karl Kroeber, who attempts to separate what he understands to be ideologically programmed and faddish historiography from his own well remembered history-as-experience of Ishi. His argument is made particularly poignant by well-chosen reference to a broad array of literature from Homer and Fenimore Cooper to Yehoshua and Vizenor. Parts III and IV address Ishi’s language, tools, songs and stories. They include the most far-reaching theoretical work in the book. Orin Starn’s short article moves well beyond its opening focus on Spanish words in Ishi’s vocabulary to address the possibility of the Yahi as a reprimativized people. Herbert Luthin and Leanne Hinton provide a compelling study

of Ishi's storytelling practice. Their elucidation of the function of specific techniques such as repetition and elaboration in the structuring of Ishi's stories is particularly revealing. While contributions by Native scholars and writers are distributed throughout the work, section V, with articles by Louis Owens, Gerald Vizenor, Frank Tuttle, Gary Strankman, and by Rebecca Dobkins on the Ishi-centered work of Native American artist Frank Day, is particularly resonant as a final chapter.

With its well-chosen photographs, suggestions for further reading, useful index, and even a 1906 map of San Francisco, *Ishi in Three Centuries* is a contribution both scholarly and topical, of great value. Its range of tone, from the personal to the analytical, its breadth of reference, from linguistics to history and criticism, and the summary nature of the whole make it an extraordinary and powerful work.

### Notes

1. See, for example, the recently published *Only the Wind Remembers* by Marlo Schalesky (Moody Publishers).
2. *Ishi in Three Centuries* (137)

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Ponting, Rick J. *The Nisga'a Treaty: Polling Dynamics and Political Communication in Comparative Context*. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2006, 179 pp., References, index. ISBN 1-55111-790-8. Paper CDN\$29.95.

The Nisga'a in Northern British Columbia have been the focus of numerous studies, several focusing on the Nisga'a Treaty Process. Rick Ponting presents a different take on the treaty process. He is concerned not so much with the treaty process from the Native point of view, but rather how non-Native opinion regarding the Nisga'a Treaty was created. He gives a close inside look at how the political authorities on different levels were working, as Ponting states, to "sell" the Treaty. Polling and communication were central in establishing sufficient legitimacy for the inventive agreement reached, a pioneer process to be followed by many other First Nations in British Columbia.

Ponting's book is carefully researched and its methodology indicated great detail. He refers to his own study as an example of political ethnography, a designation with which I personally have certain difficulties. I think political sociology is more appropriate in characterizing the work at hand.

Notably, the study was carried out during the final phase of the Treaty process and immediately after the ratification of the Treaty. The information from the political "backstage" is particularly insightful. The negative opinion expressed by many through the polling process toward the Nisga'a Treaty is also valuable information.

Ponting also compares the Nisga'a Treaty process to the somewhat commensurable process of change which occurred in Australia, the Australia Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, 1999.

Ponting's presentation makes use of a number of inserted boxes, visually separating the general text from the exclusively empirical. The twelve appendices indicate some of the hard data that lie behind the theoretical perspectives Ponting advocates, including information about his sociological method. The reader has a chance therefore to follow at close range the way in which Ponting successively approached and carried out his inquiry.

The study is rounded out by a summary and a conclusion which states that the registering of public opinion with decision makers is a social process. Based on his results, Ponting even suggests themes for future research. A postscript on the impact of the Nisga'a Treaty adds extra insight, bringing the reader up to 2005.

Finally, this book is not an anthropological test. It addresses itself mainly to political scientists and political sociologists interested in Indigenous issues, and to students in the broad field of Native Studies.

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Reuque Paillalef, Rosa Isalde. *When a Flower is Reborn: The Life and Times of a Mapuche Feminist*. Edited and translated by Florencia E. Mallon. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2002, 378 pp. ISBN 0-8223-2962-X. \$22.95.

This work provides a personal and historical view of the life experience of a remarkable Mapuche woman. The Mapuche constitute the largest Indigenous group in the southern cone of South America, with significant populations in Chile and Argentina. An appreciation of Reuque's narrative begins with the historical experience of the Mapuche nation, understandably only cursorily treated here. Although slaughtered and dispossessed through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Mapuche were the only Indigenous group to humble the Spanish and establish negotiated sovereignty through the Treaty of Killin in 1641. A first-person narrative, this rich and detailed *testimonio* provides direct access to the experience and thinking of a Mapuche leader and feminist from her youth to the present.

Reuque's unique perspective is shaped by over 30 years of service as an organizer and representative of the Mapuche during years of epochal change. She has pursued goals of justice and cultural renewal from within a complex personal nexus as an indigenous person, a Roman Catholic, and a Christian Democrat. Of these, the most sustaining is her identity as a Mapuche, an identity which has been shaped by knowledge and practice. Her attachment to the Church has been enriched by Native spiritual concepts and empowered by the good counsel of clergy. Because she understands political loyalties as functional rather than ideological, membership in the Christian Democrats has provided her a centrist position from which to work with individuals from across the political spectrum. Determination and idealism are galvanized by a practical feminism focused on respect for women within the Mapuche leadership, and an appreciation of women as the source of stability and productivity within Mapuche communities.

The *testimonio* has, since the 60s, become a significant anthropological and literary genre and the principal vehicle by which scholars have come to understand the struggle of Indigenous people in Latin America. *When a Flower is Born* is a finely crafted addition to the literature. Florencia E. Mallon's editorship has exceeded the standard in creating a work that is deeply integrated and powerfully told.

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Schilling, Vincent. *Great Athletes From Our First Nations*. Toronto: Second Stroy Press, 2007, 125 pp. ISBN 978-0-9779183-0-0. Paper CDN\$10.95

This is a very handsome, well-illustrated volume aimed at young readers. It contains an introduction and thirteen chapters, with each chapter representing a mini-biography of a prominent North American Native athlete. An attractive feature of the book is that each chapter contains one or more side bars with information about the sport in which the athlete under discussion has made his or her mark (for example, kayaking in the chapter on Alwyn Morris, or speed skating in the chapter on Ross Anderson) or about the Native community in which the individual was raised (for example, the Karuk in the chapter on Naomi Lung, or the Inuit in the chapter on Jordin Tootoo). Adults may find that the stories are the same, with only the names of the athletes and the sports seeming to change. However, young readers will learn a lot from this book about different sports and various Native groups. Furthermore, I think they will be inspired by the examples in it of people who, with support from family and friends, succeeded in achieving goals set at an early age.

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Stonechild, B. *The New Buffalo: The Struggle for Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education in Canada*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2006, 300 pp. ISBN 0-887-55-693-0 Paper \$24.95.

*The New Buffalo: The Struggle for Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education in Canada* is a fantastic book that provides an account of Aboriginal education policy from the 1850s to the present day. It is informed by a number of well-documented sources that are rich in detail. The history of Aboriginal education is fraught with colonialism and assimilation. Stonechild's final three chapters conclude the survey by providing current information about post-secondary education for Aboriginal people.

Stonechild begins by explaining that "the buffalo met virtually every need of the North American Indian, from food to shelter; this animal was

considered to be a gift from the Creator intended to provide for the peoples' needs" (p. 2), therefore the "new buffalo" is a metaphor for how post-secondary education will help Aboriginal people fulfill their needs in the postcolonial world. Even so, Stonechild also examines how federal government policies, burdened with ideologies and attitudes, continue to have an effect on the colonized history and policies of Aboriginal people in Canada.

The first chapter outlines of the conditions and effects of educational policy in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century in Canada. Some of this information has not been provided in such rich detail by other books discussing Aboriginal education.

Stonechild's examination of Aboriginal post-secondary education includes the events in 2005 regarding the First Nations University, provincial and federal policy changes, and the need for these policies to continually evolve to bring Aboriginal education out of its colonial past. In the final chapter, "The New Deal," Stonechild explores how far Aboriginal post-secondary education has come, as well as the setbacks that could potentially derail the progress already achieved to date. Stonechild provides current statistics regarding post-secondary education, including funding levels provided by the government, fields of study, and the number of Aboriginal students who graduate.

Finally, Stonechild provides appendices on significant dates in Aboriginal education, Canadian universities with Native Studies programs, and the RCAP recommendations on post-secondary education. These appendices are useful for easy and quick reference.

I have read many books on Aboriginal education and found this book to be extremely detailed and useful. Stonechild does not voice opinions about the information he is providing. Instead, he eloquently provides valuable information and key details about Aboriginal education policy and the state of Aboriginal post-secondary education in Canada today. I would highly recommend this book for Native Studies courses, or as a starting text to learn more about issues in Aboriginal education and post-secondary education. It is enjoyable and informative reading.

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Wiebe, Rudy. *Playing Dead: A Contemplation Concerning the Arctic*.  
Edmonton: NeWest Press, 2003. 149 pp. ISBN 1-896300-67-7. \$18.95

Books about the North constitute something of a genre in Canadian fiction and non-fiction. They provide an important source, particularly for the young, of terms and images with which to define land, culture and nation. Books may be inefficient instruments for the generation of identity in a culture in which the written word is no competition for mass media and the space is as vast and various as Canada. Fortunately, Wiebe's dedication to the written word remains unaffected and he still believes in the potential of Canadians to enrich themselves in a northern identity.

Readers who love the North and cannot abide Canadian ignorance and insensitivity to its own vast treasure, will rejoice in these broadly informed, deeply philosophical essays on land, history, Natives, Whites, and how each has shaped the other.

Wiebe's six essays are all analytical, critical, and reflective. Four of the essays were delivered as the 1987 Larkin-Stuart Lectures at Trinity College, University of Toronto. First published by NeWest in 1989, their current form includes the addition of two new essays (Prelude and Coda), some lovely photographs, and a map of radical perspective that both prepares and summarizes what the book is all about.

Wiebe is the consummate storyteller. Like most writers working in the area, he possesses a respectable quotient of the White man's construction of "big adventure," but it's tempered by an openness of spirit and deep thoughtfulness that link him more securely to writers such as Emerson than to adventurers such as Mowat.

The essays cover myth and memory of the Dene and Inuk people, storytelling, the hunting culture, ruminations on the historical encounter of Native and White, and conceptual failures in the White man's attempt to comprehend this land, its people, or to find a way through country deemed empty and trackless. Wiebe has created a work of rare insight.

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