

BOOK REVIEWS

Cohen, Fay G.: *Treaties on Trial*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986, 219 pp., Illus.

Treaties on Trial is a report prepared for the American Friends Service Committee (Quakers) which describes the controversy over Native fishing rights in the Pacific Northwestern region of the United States of America. In the 1850's the tribes of the northwest entered into treaties in which they gave up their land in return for cash payments and other aid. The right to fish "at all the usual and accustomed places" was assured by the treaties.

Fishing played an important part in the settlement of the Pacific Northwest as Indians clustered in the region to take advantage of an abundant food supply. Of the fish stocks available, salmon was one of the most important, and it also figured predominantly in the beliefs and rituals of the local tribes. With the influx of Europeans and the establishment of the international boundary in 1846, land settlements were negotiated between the Indians and whites which placed the Indians on reservations. With the increased settlement also came a greater demand for the fish resources. Industrial development also took its toll.

By the 1880's conflicts concerning fishing had arisen between Indians and whites, and difficult encounters resulted. In the United States, it is the state governments which control fishing legislation, unlike Canada where fisheries is a federal responsibility. When denied their right to fish, the Indians of the Northwest used the courts, with varied results, to clarify the issue and it became increasingly hard for Indians to fish. Increased frustration led to political activism in the 1960's, including "fish-ins" in defiance of the law and confrontations which eventually ended up in the federal district court before Judge George Boldt in 1973. Judge Boldt set out to make a very thorough examination of the issue with the intent of settling the controversy -- once and for all - in a comprehensive ruling. In his decision Judge Boldt affirmed the right of treaty tribes to fish at their usual and accustomed places in common with other citizens, sharing the available supply of fish stocks on a 50-50 basis with the non-Indians. At the same time, the decision established a mandate for the tribes to manage the fishing through the establishment of seasons, limits and adequate environmental safeguards.

Unhappy with the decision which forced them to give a larger share of the fishing to Indians, the non-Indian fishermen fought back. They used the media, their elected representatives and the courts in their campaign to retain their fishing industry. To help further resolve the dispute, Judge Boldt stepped in again to establish a nonjudicial board, the Fisheries Advisory Board, to mediate disagreements.

Further to the south, along the Columbia River, a negotiated solution was

reached to help resolve the fishing rights question in that area. This settlement secured the Indian fishing rights while accommodating biological needs for a five year period. Again the tribes were given the mandate to manage the fishery. These negotiations are ongoing.

Indian fishing rights continue to be a contentious issue on both sides of the border. This book takes a serious look at the issue in one region of the United States. Through a process of negotiations and co-operation a solution was reached, and although uncertain, it has provided a workable answer to the problem in that local area. This book uses frequent quotations from judges, politicians and tribal representatives to provide an interesting human approach to this subject. The book makes frequent reference to the environmental issues involved, and it hints that the well-being of the fish stocks are more important than the fishing rights of either the Indian or non-Indian people. It states that, "Tribal Fishing Rights mean nothing unless there are fish for Indians to catch. Empty waters mean empty nets - and empty rights" (p. 137). In places the book encourages Indians to fight for habitat preservation and to discourage poaching by all parties.

On the whole, the book is interesting and informative. The book does not conclude that the future will be without problems regarding fishing rights, but it does offer hope that the future of the Northwest coastal fishery will survive if the participants in this fishery can meet on common ground.

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Friesen, Gerald: *The Canadian Prairies: A History*. Toronto, London: University of Toronto Press, 1984, xv + 524 pp., Maps, Plates, Bibliog., Index.

The historian faces a difficult task in undertaking a synthesis of history, but it is a particularly large order to synthesize the history of a diverse region such as the Canadian prairies. Perhaps this is why Gerald Friesen begins his story, *The Canadian Prairies*, with the land.

The introductory chapter describes in poetic style the three landscapes which constitute the prairie region, conveying the spirit of the land which shapes the spirit of its peoples. For most of the past 500 years, economy and history have bound the three landscapes into a single region. This unity provides thematic support for Friesen's largely economic and political history of the prairie provinces.

Friesen presents a survey of richly detailed research which, while necessarily relying primarily on secondary sources for information, documents the historical development of the prairies in a scholarly manner. The book remains accessible in style to both the student and general reader.

In order to treat the comprehensive material coherently, Friesen organizes the past four centuries into manageable portions of time. The single volume provides at the beginning a Native history of the pre-contact years which helps to fill the gaps, not only in chronological time, but in the historical development of the prairie region. Friesen examines the debate of scholars concerning the Native-European relationship of the fur trade and asks by whose culture the gains and losses of the Natives will be measured. He concludes that European trade enriched the Cree and Assiniboine peoples and that both sides retained considerable autonomy in the first century of the fur trade. The specialization of the region's economy was the single factor which may have contributed to problems in trade.

Over one third of the book is devoted to Native history. Continuity, autonomy, and adaptation were central aspects of the Native experience in the early fur trade. Friesen does not have much to say about the second century of the fur trade other than that the rise in the Metis population, along with several other factors, affected Native cultures. The real problems began in the late 1800's with interference from the white Canadian church and government officials.

Friesen traces the reasons for the loss of Native autonomy in the nineteenth century to population changes: the first was an influx of eastern North Americans; the second was the destruction of the buffalo. As the twentieth century approached, political problems and technological advancement were now dealt with by a European Canadian society and not by a Native society.

Friesen chronicles such developments and events as the National Policy, the Riel uprising, the 1919 General Strike, and the Great Depression, examining the political and economic forces and, to a lesser extent, the social and cultural aspects. In the post-war years, internationalization of social change and the economy placed increasing pressure on the prairies. However, Friesen maintains that the region still retained local autonomy over aspects of the economy, culture, and social organization.

The Canadian Prairies follows the general development of prairie history (beginning with Native culture) and examines issues and events which are in most part specific to this region, its geography, and its people. If there is a gap remaining in Friesen's story, he does not need to apologize. He fulfilled his purpose of synthesis in combining a series of elements into a whole.

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Geiogamah, Hanay: *New Native American Drama: Three Plays*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980, xxiv + 135 pp.

Native American writers have made many contributions to poetry, auto

biography, short stories and novels but dramatic productions are rare. Hanay Geiogamah's trilogy is a valuable contribution to the growing body of Native Literature. Teachers of literature courses will welcome the opportunity to include drama that is uniquely Native.

Geiogamah's plays show powerful, intimate glimpses of Indian life. They convey deliberate messages which comment on contemporary themes, messages which are brutal and uncompromising. They are, however, usually conveyed with such undisguised humor that the reader is convulsed with laughter; the ultimate message is the triumph of the human spirit.

All three plays have been performed by the Native American Theatre Ensemble. *Body Indian* played in New York, toured the United States and played in Berlin for six weeks. *Foghorn* premiered in Berlin and 49 played in Oklahoma City.

Body Indian is perhaps the most memorable play, at once depressing and shocking but ultimately a play with some hope. The setting is a one-room apartment; the style is conventional although special effects are provided by means of slides on the back wall. Bobby Lee, the main character, has money and is determined to pay for a cure for his alcoholism. But first he visits his relatives who solicitously provide more and more drink, bought with the money they steal off Bobby when he has passed out. Eventually all Bobby's money is gone; they even pawn his wooden leg. In summary it appears to be a very disturbing play, but Geiogamah's sensitive humor and his careful craftsmanship create a work of art which comments eloquently on a pressing social problem.

Foghorn is a multi-media extravaganza consisting of many short scenes with human actors complimented by music, lights and graphics. It is a play about stereotypes "pushed to the point of absurdity" (p. 49). Stereotypes which begin with Columbus and end with Wounded Knee are presented. Again, Geiogamah's humor is instrumental in shaping the play; it comes as no surprise that stage directions call for "Very Lofty Church-Organ Music" to accompany the nun scene as she carries a cross made of paper money, or that Pocahontas sings "The Indian Love Call" (or even that John Smith, after tantalizing Pocahontas unmercifully with his kisses finds himself impotent). There is a "Savage Brutal Scalp Dance" and an "Old-fashioned piano for chasing a Lovely White Maiden".

The play has a definite purpose - for the laughter engendered by the ridiculous stereotypes demands examination of old ideas. The degradation of Indians is subtly turned back onto the viewers who no longer can complacently acquiesce to the perpetuation of these stereotypes.

49 is the most sophisticated play, combining the traditional and contemporary. It relies strongly on music, a wide variety of traditional Native American instruments, dance and mime. A "49" is a contemporary social event where young Indians gather for a night of singing, dancing and conversation. Though there is illicit revelry, what is important is that it is a time of communication, of renewal and a fostering of a sense of community. The message of the play is the coming together of the young and a continuance of a strong Indian identity. The character of Night Walker, a singer, observes, but does not par-

ticipate in the events of the evening. He represents traditional values; he fears for the future of the children and prays that strength will be found when it is needed. Interspersed with traditional and 49 music is the crackle of police radios as they needlessly attempt to break up the gathering. The police represent violence, disruption, change - but the group is strong enough to defy external forces. Symbolism rather than humor characterizes this play but the end result is equally satisfying.

A thoughtful introduction by Jeffrey Hunt, Associate Professor of English at Indiana University will greatly assist in the teaching or production of these plays.

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Salisbury, Richard F.: *A Homeland for the Cree*. Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986, xiv + 172 pp.

A Homeland for the Cree is a book that needed to be written, for although there exist a plethora of technical studies on the James Bay Cree, there was, until the present study, no one general overview. It is also a book that needed to be written precisely by Richard Salisbury, for as director of the initial (1971) social impact study of the James Bay hydro-electric project, he was at the center of the research. Yet his actual involvement in the Cree communities has been scanty; this very fact may have facilitated his evident ability to observe larger patterns emerging from a myriad of small activities, and to situate the Cree homeland within the content of Quebec and Canada.

The book fulfills Dr. Salisbury's stated goal: "to show how the major recent changes in the way of life of the Cree of northern Quebec constitute an emergent outgrowth from their preexisting society and culture" (p. vii). The author begins by giving us a still-life portrait of Cree village-band society in 1971. After a brief chronological interlude showing the major political events surrounding the James Bay hydro-electric project, time is again stopped in 1981 and we begin to read, not of village-bands, but of a regional society - seven Cree communities closely linked to each other and to the non-Native world by a complex structure of service organizations run by fewer than 100 Cree.

The text describes, in accessible language, the factors which precipitated the Cree to formulate a relatively successful regional government. Described are events such as a crisis (the hydro-electric project); the existence of a local subsistence economy (hunting); and the presence of a small group of educated Cree whom Dr. Salisbury shows as active in shaping their destiny, rather than the usual portrayal of passive Native submission before non-Native culture. The

writer also mentions (Epilogue) the pool of non-Native talent upon which the Cree were able to draw. These scholars provided much-needed information to the Cree and usually seem to have been content to let the Cree make their own decisions.

Dr. Salisbury allows readers to draw their own conclusions on several difficult issues: internal disaffection with regional programs; who pays for Cree regional society (the Cree pay no income tax); will subsistence hunting continue? In all instances, the problems are dealt with in optimistic fashion and the reader feels that the recent Cree experience may, indeed, be a model for other peoples struggling to control their own destinies.

A Homeland for the Cree is suitable reading for any person interested in Canada's north and Natives, and essential reading for any scholar wishing to understand political systems and the James Bay Cree.

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