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An Annotated Bibliography of Major
Writings in Aboriginal History,
1990–99



In the fall of 1999 long simmering tensions between Native and non-Native Maritime fishers reached a breaking point following the Supreme Court's *Marshall* decision affirming the region's Aboriginal fishery. Mi'kmaq leaders insisted that the federal government's regulatory policies quickly adjust to accommodate the recognition of their treaty fishing and hunting rights, whereas non-Native fishers accused the court and the federal government of betrayal in their apparent unwillingness to look after the public interest. Violence followed, resulting in the destruction of Mi'kmaq lobster traps and the vandalizing of processing plants. These events, derived from conflicting interpretations of historical treaties and their contemporary expression, are but one recent development in the long-standing debate over the role and meaning of Aboriginal history in Canada.

As the *Marshall* decision reveals, many Canadians do not support the idea of Aboriginal rights, while many others do not understand the meaning of the term.¹ Outside the realm of Native rights, courtroom dramas over allegations of residential school abuse make clear to all the financial and moral costs of ignoring past state-sanctioned injustices against both Aboriginal groups and individuals. As Native leaders have long argued (and as many historians must be pleased to hear), diffusing the cross-cultural tensions requires dialogue and mediation, built on a solid base of carefully contextualized historical knowledge. Over the past decade, as more and more court decisions have reaffirmed long-denied Aboriginal rights and exposed long-hidden abuses, historians have come to play an increasingly important, if not always appreciated, public role. The responsibility this role places on historians is ominous yet stirring, for what scholars of Native history have to say is genuinely significant

1 See also Kerry Abel, "'Tangled, Lost and Bitter?'" Current Directions in the Writing of Native History in Canada,' *Acadiensis* 26, 1 (1996), 96.

today, not just to other academics and indigenous readers but to all Canadians.²

The current vigour of Canadian Aboriginal history is remarkable, given the field's relative obscurity a generation ago.³ A quick perusal of articles and book reviews in Canada's major national and regional history journals suggests that more, perhaps, has been written about Canadian Native history in the past decade than in the fifty years preceding. Moreover, and perhaps more to the point, what is being written about the Aboriginal past is not being ghettoized from the broader Canadian historiography. One need but look at the space dedicated to Aboriginal history in recent issues of standard introductory Canadian history textbooks to realize that an appreciation of the nation's Native past is now considered essential to understanding Canadian history more broadly.

Before the late 1960s, what little Native history existed was largely a subcomponent of fur trade studies concerned with documenting Canadian economic and political development. The works of Harold Innis stand out in this regard: they did much to pave the road for subsequent studies of what became known as the history of Indian-white relations. Meanwhile, scholars such as Alfred G. Bailey and Homer G. Barnett who made genuine efforts to place Aboriginal people at the centre of their analysis remained largely ignored by the academic establishment.⁴ The emergence and growth of ethnohistorical studies in the late 1960s through the early 1980s signalled a movement towards seeking Native perspectives in Indian-white relations.⁵ Simultaneously, increasingly strong calls from Native and non-Native scholars (notably Bruce Trigger, Calvin Martin, Jack Forbes, Vine Deloria, Harold Cardinal, and Howard Adams) marked the coming of age of concerted attempts to regard Native history from Aboriginal perspectives. While professionally trained

- 2 The *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (1996) makes a strong case for historical study and education as essential components in the process of social change and reconciliation. The voluminous report is available through the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs' Web site at <www.inac.gc.ca>.
- 3 For a succinct and balanced overview, see Ken Coates, 'Writing First Nations into Canadian History: A Review of Recent Scholarly Works,' *Canadian Historical Review* 81, 1 (2000): 99-114.
- 4 Alfred G. Bailey, *The Conflict of European and Eastern Algonkin Cultures, 1504-1700: A Study in Canadian Civilization* (St Johns, New Brunswick Museum 1937; reprint, Toronto, University of Toronto Press 1969), Homer G. Barnett, *Indian Shakers: A Messianic Cult of the Pacific Northwest* (Carbondale, Ill., Southern Illinois University Press 1957)
- 5 Bruce Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's Heroic Age Reconsidered* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens' University Press 1995), 3-48

Aboriginal historians are still few,⁶ Native Nations are increasingly commissioning histories of their people.⁷

It is not just that more Aboriginal history is being written but that more *types* of Aboriginal history are appearing. Today, much of the scholarship continues to emphasize Native-newcomer relations, but the temporal coverage has expanded into the twentieth century.⁸ Likewise, discussion over the nature of Indian-white relations has grown to include social, institutional, and even spiritual matters in addition to political and economic issues. And if Native-newcomer relations still dominate, their expression has shifted. Although the interactions between settler communities and Native North American cultural communities continue to be a subject of research, more emphasis than ever before is being directed towards the *products* of those relations. In this regard, 'middle ground' studies have come to form a core element of the growing field of Native history.⁹ More radically, many new studies now explore aspects of Aboriginal historical experience that occurred outside European experiences or outside the gaze of non-Native observers.¹⁰ This development has been facilitated by a broadening of the definition of what constitutes acceptable evidence to include oral histories,¹¹ artistic images,¹² and song and dance traditions. Poststructural methodologies and literary discourse analysis have more recently shifted some academic focus away from documenting experiences to exploring the manner in which culturally constructed understandings shape how those experiences are perceived.

6 Olive Dickason and George E. Stouf remain the only Aboriginal historians of national stature.

7 See, for example, Daniel P. Marshall, *Those Who Fell from the Sky: A History of the Cowichan People* (Duncan, BC: Cowichan Community Land Trust Society and Sandhill Book Marketing 1999).

8 Prominent works examining twentieth-century Native-newcomer relations include Arthur J. Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1991); Frank Tough, 'As Their Natural Resources Fail': *Native Peoples and the Economic History of Northern Manitoba, 1870-1930* (Vancouver: UBC Press 1996); and Paul Tennant, *Aboriginal People and Politics: The Indian Land Question in British Columbia, 1849-1989* (Vancouver: UBC Press 1990).

9 The term 'middle ground' has become a historiographical commonplace derived from Richard White, *The Middle Ground. Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991).

10 Robert Galois, *Kwakwaka'wakw Settlements, 1775-1920: A Geographical Gazetteer* (Vancouver: UBC Press 1994).

11 Julie Cruikshank remains at the forefront of those exploring oral traditions as historical sources. See *The Social Life of Stories: Narrative and Knowledge in the Yukon Territory* (Vancouver: UBC Press 1998).

12 Daniel Francis, *Copying People: Photographing BC First Nations, 1860-1940* (Saskatoon and Calgary: Fifth House 1996); Allan Ryan, *The Trickster Shift* (Vancouver: UBC Press 1999).

This shift has been expressed most forcefully in the growing body of literature dealing with the way constructs of race and gender have worked to prescribe Aboriginal historical outcomes.¹³

If one were to isolate a single factor as having had the greatest impact on the writing of Canadian Aboriginal history, it would have to be the decisions of Canadian courts and the generally negative experience of historians who have participated in the process of constructing history through litigative (or negotiated) means. As has been the case throughout Canadian history, interest in Native issues among the non-Aboriginal public ebbs and flows in accordance with the perceived impact (threat) of Native actions or aspirations. We have but to reflect on the way the names Delgamuukw, Sparrow, Gladstone, and Marshall have entered the Canadian lexicon and to recall the public fascination with events at Oka, Gustafsen Lake, and Ipperwash to recognize that Aboriginal history is contemporary and political.

Yet if court battles largely provided Aboriginal history with the basis for its current verve, it is the legacy of professional historians' participation in what has come to be referred to as 'advocacy' research that poses the foremost threat to the field's future legitimacy. Growing pains are not uncommon within rapidly evolving realms of study. What sets the mounting criticism of Aboriginal history apart is the degree to which it is generated and propagated beyond the familiar confines of academia and within the public political realm.¹⁴ Thus, while the woefully ill-conceived interpretations of indigenous history emerging from court decisions such as Chief Justice McEachern's 1991 *Delgamuukw* ruling served to invigorate the discipline by motivating strong but reasoned academic response, they have also led a vocal segment of non-Native society to accuse historians of professional bias and self-censorship. Scholars who conduct research on behalf of Aboriginal organizations involved in disputes with government are especially susceptible to accusations of partisan study, regardless of the strength of their arguments in relation to their evidence.

Given the politicized nature of Canada's Native history, it is remarkable how little serious debate occurs within the discipline. The field remains, on the whole, cordial when it comes to published criticism (book reviews excepted). Moreover, as in Canadian history generally, there is a tendency for historians of the Aboriginal past to seek out new

¹³ Sarah Carter, *Capturing Women: The Manipulation of Cultural Imagery in Canada's Prairie West* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press 1997)

¹⁴ See, for example, Melvin H. Smith's polemic long-time best-seller, *Our Home or Native Land? What Government's Aboriginal Policy Is Doing to Canada* (Victoria: Crown Western 1995).

subject matter and new bodies of evidence, not to challenge existing interpretations with new theoretical or methodological points of reference. Thus, while historians commonly expose the warts and ugliness of governmental policies and the legacy of non-Native racism, there is less willingness to engage in monograph-length studies that might be seen as trespassing on someone else's academic turf or reflecting critically on popular views or cherished notions of the Aboriginal past.¹⁵ As a result, some worry that the continued compartmentalization of Aboriginal history keeps the field a mile wide in terms of subject matter, but an inch deep with regard to internal debates. Others point out, much to the consternation of many of their colleagues, that Aboriginal history has become a prisoner of those who want to use it as a foil to critique the excesses of Western society, rather than as a genuine and balanced investigation of the Aboriginal past.¹⁶ Such voices potentially hold within them the means of sustaining the field's vitality, by reminding us that the pieties of today, like those of yesterday, are subject to challenge and revision.

Aboriginal history has begun to make genuine progress in expanding the breadth of its coverage in terms not only of methodology and theory – as in Mary-Ellen Kelm's Macdonald Prize-winning *Colonizing Bodies: Aboriginal Health and Healing in British Columbia, 1900–1950* (Vancouver: UBC Press 1998) – but of the solid scholarship behind the most contemporary contrarian scholarship. Within our appraisals we seek, in a modest way, to engage in some debate while providing educators and researchers with a survey of the most significant contributions to Native history from the last decade of the twentieth century. By 'significant,' we mean works that have challenged existing interpretations, applied new and innovative methodologies, uncovered and analyzed new evidence, or in other ways contributed to the advancement of knowledge and the vigour of academic debate. Each volume's usefulness as a teaching tool is also considered. We include a small number of texts that are noteworthy not necessarily for their scholarship, but for the issues they raise or their impact on popular understandings of the Aboriginal past – even new editions of classic works. We have intentionally selected studies that reflect trends both inside and outside academia.

In surveying the literature on a national level, we found it best to organize this annotated bibliography into fourteen thematic sections: 1) general background; 2) identity and ethnicity; 3) oral history and mem-

15 A well-known exception to this rule is Shepard Krech, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (New York: W W Norton 1999).

16 Leland Donald, *Aboriginal Slavery on the Northwest Coast of North America* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1997), provides one of the boldest critiques of this kind

ory; 4) Aboriginal rights, title, and resources; 5) approaches to history/historiography; 6) ethnohistory; 7) society and culture; 8) women and gender; 9) Métis; 10) cultural and intellectual history; 11) colonial relations of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; 12) colonial/post-colonial relations of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; 13) missionization and residential schools; and 14) economics.¹⁷ This thematic organization is meant less to reflect genuinely exclusive demarcations than to provide readers with helpful guidelines for navigating a growing literature that is ever wider in scope and more complex in subject matter. Although this bibliography focuses on works in Canadian Aboriginal history, we have integrated a number of recent American texts judged significant for their comparative perspective. Another useful feature of this bibliography is the inclusion of references to book reviews found in the *Canadian Historical Review*.

This critical appraisal of recent, significant publications in Native history has been prepared by a trio of doctoral candidates in history at the University of British Columbia. While all three of us share a Native history research orientation, our group could not be more diverse. Keith Thor Carlson, a Canadian historian whose early publications focused on decolonization in the Philippines, coordinates and directs historical research for the Stó:lō Nation. His forthcoming dissertation places evolving expressions of Coast Salish identity within a historical context. Kenichi Matsui, a Japanese national who received his university training in Japan, Australia, and the United States, is broadly interested in comparative Pacific Rim Indigenous history. His doctoral thesis explores issues of Aboriginal water rights in the trans-boundary regions of British Columbia, Alberta, and Montana. Melinda Marie Jetté is an American citizen who is documenting and analyzing the intercultural history of her ancestral French Canadian-Indian community in Oregon on the eve of American colonization. She has studied in France, the United States, and Quebec. With regard to the allocation of the annotation work, many of the sections were shared efforts, while others were largely the domain of one contributor. For this reason, we have listed the annotator's initials after each bibliographic citation.

¹⁷ A missing section might be 'Native Sexuality in Canada,' but to date there are no book-length historical studies on this subject. Interested readers are encouraged to consult the modest but growing American scholarship on this subject, most of which is conducted within anthropological discourse. See, for example, Walter Williams, *The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Cultures* (Boston: Beacon Press 1992), and Sue-Ellen Jacobs, Wesley Thomas, and Sabine Lang, eds., *Two-Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press 1997).