

REVIEW OF**PHILIP LEE, *RESTIGOUCHE: THE LONG RUN OF THE WILD RIVER.*****FREDERICTON: GOOSE LANE EDITIONS, 2020.****Peter Clancy**

This is an elegantly written exploration of New Brunswick's 'third' river, which deserves a deep and rich discussion and this book certainly provides it. *Restigouche* also offers valuable inspiration for studies of other Canadian rivers, large and small. Not all authors will be as immersed in their subjects as is Philip Lee, but all students of rivers will be enriched by reflecting on his work.

On the surface, this book tells the story of the author's canoe trip from the source to the mouth of the Restigouche River. Lee accomplishes this over three stages, which form the organizing framework for the book. As a naturalist, fisherman, and writer, Lee may have found the years of preparation – in research, interviews, and site visits – to be as stimulating as the actual expedition. It certainly enabled him to interpret both the river and the watershed as a project in time.

The material is presented in a somewhat unusual format; with numerous short, numbered chapters within each of the three major sections. This allows the author to situate his personal memories - of fishing, camping, and canoeing on particular reaches of the Restigouche - alongside discussions of physical and cultural features, historical events, and contemporary incidents in those same locales. It also effectively conveys the multiple and often contested meanings of place, and the ways that meanings can be elevated or suppressed by virtue of the underlying interests involved.

This treatment of the Restigouche River will offer many revelations to readers not immersed in the world of Atlantic salmon. We find fascinating sections on colonial occupation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, on the exploding popularity of the watershed with wealthy North American sport fishermen, on the practice of canoeing by pole as distinct from paddle, on the world of fishing 'holes' along the Restigouche and, of course, on the Irving group of companies.

There are compelling sections on the many ways that New Brunswick Crown land has been dispensed, by sale and lease, to a succession of commercial sawmill and pulp and paper enterprises. Readers will find intriguing accounts of changes in forest harvesting, mechanical and silvicultural, including New Brunswick's history of chemical and biological spray campaigns.

The same applies to angling practices. Lee describes key players in creating the late- nineteenth-century New Brunswick policy of transferring exclusive fishing rights to capitalists and aristocrats through sale and lease, river 'protection' patrolling, and the establishment of fishing 'clubs.' During his trip down the river, the author encounters fishing lodges from different generations, providing vivid accounts of their backgrounds. This captures the de facto privatization of the most valued fishing reaches of the river, along with the recent challenges to this practice.

A key subject in *Restigouche* is the place of Indigenous Peoples over more than four hundred years of contact with Euro-Canadian society. The homelands of the Maliseet/Wəlastəkwiyyik and Mi'kmaq peoples have been curtailed and undermined in multiple ways. This began with the assertion of colonial and provincial Crown title to watershed and riparian use. It continued with the relentless

tightening of fishing access by legal regulations. Restrictions on fishing by spear and net, and limitations by open and closed seasons, are the most visible means by which sport salmon fishing gained dominance over subsistence fishing. Alongside this came a denial of treaty-based guarantees for hunting, fishing, and gathering.

The contemporary First Nations challenge to this regime is also well covered in this book. The 1981 salmon war, for instance, in which the Government of Quebec occupied the Mi'kmaq community of Listuguj, will now be known by more Canadians. The subsequent political mobilization of Indigenous communities, through the Gespe'gewa'gi district of Mi'kma'gi, is another fascinating political thread.

One powerful theme is the recognition of wildness in the function of rivers, as indicated by the subtitle of the book. For many reasons, the Restigouche has not been subject to the range of works that are now standard on major Canadian rivers. There are no dams, irrigation diversions, or flood control facilities to regulate the flow. Yet even here there are pressures. In the lower, coastal reaches, industrial effluent has altered water quality. Moreover, along the river, clearcut forestry and riparian degradation have altered fish habitat.

Lee's contacts include many of the key players – personal and associational – that have emerged in recent decades to challenge prevailing practices and to speak, in different ways, for wildness. Alliances seek to bridge several divides: between Indigenous and white communities, between Acadian and English New Brunswickers, and between regional residents of the two provinces whose boundary the Restigouche defines.

Restigouche does contain two modest shortcomings. One has to do with maps, of which Lee offers hand-drawn sketches of the three segments through which he travelled. I expect this was a deliberate gesture to highlight the intersections of key tributaries and the sequence of fishing holes discussed. Naturalists (and salmon fishers) are keenly aware of how knowledge disclosed without care can threaten the very attributes they seek to celebrate. Nonetheless, a portrait of the Restigouche watershed, from top to bottom, would have been an aid to unfamiliar readers.

The second has to do with the relative absence of one notorious player in Atlantic salmon, the federal government in the form of Fisheries and Oceans Canada. This agency is normally a part of conservation discussions on Maritime Canadian rivers. Is the Restigouche an exception?

This is a carefully crafted book, a personal testimony set within a wider context of impersonal forces that have been exerted across dozens of generations. For Lee, a lifetime of canoeing, fishing, and socializing along the Restigouche translates into an innovative and thoughtful portrayal of this river.

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