

An Introduction to Canadian Archaeology. David L. Newlands and
Claus Breede. Toronto, McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1976. 151p.,
illus. ISBN 0-07-082339-1. \$8.95.
Reviewed by Dianne Newell.

An Introduction stems from Newlands's and Breede's concern for the practice and teaching of historical archaeology in Canada. It is a primer of sports, a Canadian layman's manual on certain aspects of belowground historical archaeology similar in scope to Ivor Noël Hume's 1969 classic, Historical Archaeology.

The book's success as an introductory text depends on what level we examine it. As a widely distributed handbook on Canadian archaeology it is, of course, unique. In terms of its design and presentation it is exemplary. When it comes to a question of substance, however, this book has a number of problems. An Introduction is supposed to be a guide for those breaking into the field and as such the authors can mislead readers as much by what they leave out as by what they put in. This book excludes any discussion of why archaeology is valuable, why artifacts and their spatial context are worth recording in the first place, and also excludes all reference to current thinking in the field. This failure to discuss archaeology as a discipline somewhat limits its potential as an introductory text or work of reference.

Some archaeologists will be critical of the "how to" aspect of this book because only a single excavation technique is described. Whether that technique is widely accepted within the profession or not is a matter for archaeologists to debate, but an introduction to a discipline should at the very least outline the range of techniques available to its practitioners. If such a list on the real world of archaeology had been included it would reflect the growing concern among archaeologists about a basic fact of excavation -- that it effectively destroys the site excavated and hence an essential aspect of the archaeological record. Recognition of the destructive aspect of excavation has led in the past decade to considerable rethinking about what,

when, and how to dig. Indeed, some of the work of North American archaeologists is devoted to identifying and preserving archaeological sites as cultural and historical resources, excavating them only as a last resort. Often excavation undertaken as a last resort falls into the category of salvage archaeology, where front-end loaders are more practical than the toothbrushes required by more traditional procedures. Newlands and Breede could also mention the research potential of standing, or above-ground, remains to archaeological inquiry. As a final note on significant omissions in this book, Canadian historic sites archaeologists will be justifiably surprised by its exclusive reference to museum-related archaeology. Specifically, it overlooks the extensive archaeological projects and important publication series, Canadian Historic Sites: Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History, sponsored by Parks Canada.

The book's real strength lies in the thought and details poured into those chapters which precede and follow the ones on field work and excavation, for it is in them that Newlands and Breede surpass the routine contributions of Canadian historiography. The information on historical sources and on the preparation of illustrations and reports is commendably generous and detailed. Where else does a material culture researcher or a local historian, let alone an archaeologist, learn of the background to land records in Canada or what nineteenth-century mercantile reference books are all about. Even here, though, I qualify my praise: the authors do not go far enough. For one thing, they are remarkably uncritical in their presentation. They do not discuss the built-in biases and limitations in any type of historical evidence, including artifacts. For another, the importance of historical sources to archaeological research will change with the questions being posed. Newlands and Breede mention (p.7) the value of asking questions of a site. Examples of the sorts of questions archaeologists raise and the historical sources appropriate for answering them would have been welcomed.

An Introduction is enterprising -- in that it was undertaken in Canada at all -- and intellectually promising. It also is timid and unfinished. We need a revised and somewhat expanded version of this book, one that brings us up-to-date with the field and one that is willing to discuss the full potential of archaeology -- below, on, and above the ground -- for advancing our understanding of what happened to people in the past.

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Western Canadian History: Museum Interpretations. D.R. Richeson, ed. Ottawa, National Museums of Canada, 1979. National Museum of Man Mercury Series, History Division Paper No. 27. 158p., illus. ISSN 0316-1900.
Reviewed by Alan F.J. Artibise.

It is a fond assumption of academic historians that the public read their books. It is not a very accurate one. Best-sellers in the field of scholarly publishing are volumes that sell in the neighbourhood of 5,000 copies. Since one of the major goals of historians is to interpret and present a society's past to all its citizens, concerned practitioners of the craft of history must look to other means to get their messages to the general public. There are many ways that this goal can be achieved. Some historians are frequent public speakers; others act as consultants for films and television. In recent years a significant number have contributed to Canada's Visual History, a joint project of the National Film Board and the National Museum of Man. This series produces slide sets which are now in use at all teaching levels, providing the results of recent academic research to large numbers of primary, secondary, college, and university students. Yet, in terms of impact and of numbers reached, museums remain the most effective way to reach the general public. For this reason alone, academic historians can no longer afford to ignore these institutions.