

against the "modern" for not being "homely" or "cosy" enough, although this was more often expressed by the older segment of the population. All those who responded were in favour of fixing a price limit for some items. In 1953, the Council of Industrial Design continued to try to monitor and educate the public taste. Two dining rooms, one comfortable, conventional, inter-war period, and the other "softened" modern, were set up. Again the public was asked to register their choice. Although the modern won by sixty-five percent, interviewees commented that the examples were the best type of modern and the worst type of supposedly conventional and that the choice was therefore "grossly unfair."

Dover credits the Design Research Unit, set up in 1942, for introducing the term "industrial design" into general usage, and for championing the value of industrial design to the

national economy and for raising standards of living. The term industrial designer came to mean anyone designing for mass production. Design as a profession was strengthened when the Council of Industrial Design was set up by the Board of Trade in 1944 to promote the improvement of British product design and to educate the public about "good design." It is this Council that was the inspiration of the Canadian National Design Council.

Dover concludes, in *Home Front Furniture*, that the Utility Scheme successfully fulfilled its real purpose — the provision of quality goods for those who needed them most at accessible prices — but it failed in terms of what Gordon Russell and other aesthetic reformers had hoped to achieve. Despite all the rhetoric, exhibitions and compulsory standardization, the British public was still largely able to thwart their efforts to impose "good design."

Arthur J. Ray, *I Have Lived Here Since the World Began: An Illustrated History of Canada's Native People*

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Ray, Arthur J. *I Have Lived Here Since the World Began: An Illustrated History of Canada's Native People*. Toronto: Lester Publishing Ltd and Key Porter Books, 1996. 398 pp., 209 illus., cloth \$45, ISBN 1-895555-94-9.

As the commissioners for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) point out, "history is not an exact science."¹ In practice, histories are often composed of the stories that best suit the interests and understandings of particular peoples. Until recently, the plot of Canadian history dwelt only on the heroic exploits of the founders of the new nation. Not too long ago, one could read an authoritative Canadian history text and find no more than a few lines dispensing with the history of aboriginal peoples.² Interest in Native peoples was limited to anthropological studies that attempted to "salvage" supposedly "pre-contact" cultural relics from remote communities. The pre-contact history of Native peoples was considered "mythical," while their post-contact history spelled out stories of their doom by death or assimilation. Thus, in 1932, Diamond Jenness could confidently assert that despite the huge size of the Ojibwa population and territory, they "did not play a very prominent part in the history of the Dominion," while the Iroquois of

Six Nations "earned a prominent place in every Canadian history" by siding with the British, but would "undoubtedly disappear as separate communities" within the century.³

Although Native communities have neither physically nor culturally vanished, the seeming conspiracy to "disappear" Canada's First Peoples from Canadian history has held sway in the media, in courts of law and in governmental policies affecting Native peoples. When newspapers report Native resistance to continuing infringement on Native lands and resources, they seldom explain the relevant histories of colonial land seizure, or acknowledge Native peoples' significant contributions to Canadian society. Instead, media coverage conveys the impression that Native communities are greedy and violent "special interest" groups. Where it concerns Native economic history, newspapers cite millions after millions of dollars that Native people are costing taxpayers, and citizens cling to the notion that Natives are, in fact, more privileged than "average" Canadians.⁴

With some significant exceptions (pp. 336–337, 311–312),⁵ judges have largely ignored two decades worth of scholarly and Native contributions to the rewriting of Native history. Instead, they hold to the familiar views

that have shaped economic, political and legal policies since the time of first contact. For example, James Clifford observed that an American federal judge was moved by the "unambiguous" narrative of the state's historian, but unimpressed by the scholarly rigor of the expert witnesses for the Mashpee nation.⁶ Similarly, in the Gitskan and Wet'suwet'en land claim case in British Columbia, the judge discredited the testimony of both Native and academic witnesses for the plaintiffs and found convincing instead the Crown lawyer's recitation of colonial mythology: because "Indians" were "lawless" by custom and "war-like" by nature, they held no legal title to their land at the time of contact, and even if they had, they had forfeited it by virtue of abandoning their "distinctly Indian way of life" (pp. 363-365).

As an expert witness for the Gitskan and Wet'suwet'en, Arthur Ray was frustrated by the Crown lawyer's apparent unfamiliarity with the "highly varied nature of the historical experiences of Canada's aboriginal people" (p. xiii). It is in this context that he decided to write *I Have Lived Here Since the World Began: An Illustrated History of Canada's Native People*, which is a comprehensive study of Canada's First Nations' economic histories written for a general readership. If scholarly and Native revisionings of Canadian history are affecting neither the public at large, nor their elected and appointed officials, perhaps it is strategic to present the archival facts in a form that is accessible to them.

With twenty chapters, in 368 pages, the book is a formidable prospect for the lay reader. Its format, however, counteracts its size in several ways. Each chapter begins with a poignant quotation from archival or ethnographic sources that creatively sparks the reader's interest in the text to come. As well, the whole book is generously interspersed with black-and-white photographs and includes four additional sections of glossy colour illustrations. The captions accompanying these pictures are informative, interesting and relevant to the adjacent text. The latter is written in narrative form and is composed of many overlapping stories that follow a general progression from the first archaeological signs of inhabitation to the present and from European contact from eastern Canada to the west. As an ethno-historian, Ray handles his almost exclusively archival sources with the expertise necessary to bring the records to life and thereby relate a comprehensive, but engaging, tale of the relations between Natives and Euro-Canadians. His presentation brings

the distinctiveness of Native nations and prominent Native individuals to the foreground.

The theoretical thrust of the work is to recast Canadian Native peoples from roles as passive victims of a superior society to those of active agents in their own destiny who struggle energetically and creatively for and against various colonizing powers. The stories throughout the book introduce the reader to the circumstances, choices and consequential actions of Native nations and individuals in every part of the country. They clearly illustrate how Native economic history underlies their histories of politics, law, war and cultural transformation. In this respect, the work not only brings to light aspects of Native history that have been hidden, but also delineates a set of relationships that are of paramount importance to the futures of Native and non-Native Canadians alike. The historic battles for lands and resources continue to be at the root of the many social ills and injustices that preclude an equitable Canadian society.

I Have Lived Here Since the World Began may be of particular interest to material culture scholars because, although much of Ray's discussion is about subsistence aspects of Native economies, his general economic emphasis tends also to highlight material history. The book contains many stories about things: beaver hats, buffalo robes, moccasins, kettles, beads, canoes, carts, trains, hoes, axes, and many more. Individually, these stories lend themselves well to various "social life of things" approaches to the analysis of objects.⁷ Collectively, the stories show the tremendous force with which things have driven colonial history.

For instance, in the seventeenth century, the European taste for beaver hats gave the James Bay Cree an economic edge, whereas environmentalists' condemnation of hunting now attacks their life-ways (pp. 69-70, 341-342); as consumers of trade goods, the expertise of Great Lakes nations gave them bargaining power when European fur companies were competing for their business (pp. 74-75); after the buffalo were gone, leaders of Plains nations demanded agricultural tools that were consequently promised by treaty but never forthcoming (pp. 249-250); during the 1880s, the redistribution of wealth in the potlatch ceremonies of the West Coast Native nations became illegal, thereby enabling authorities in the 1920s to confiscate ceremonial regalia that is now kept by national and provincial museums (pp. 226-230); and so on. As a general rule, commodity exchange preceded and underlay all

other forms of intercultural relations. Ray's work provides a starting point for a comparative historic approach to Canadian material culture that scholars have barely touched upon to date.

There are at least two audiences, however, that may find weaknesses in the book. Academic specialists will no doubt be disappointed when they find that the mechanisms of Ray's excellent scholarship are completely erased from view. There are no citations, footnotes or endnotes and only the most meagre of bibliographies. From a specialist's point of view, this format has serious impediments to its use as a reference and a resource. Furthermore, both the ambitious extent and the popular style of the work tend to compress the "facts" drawn from primary sources into simplified stories that leave out complexities that the expert may find crucial. As well, from a theoretical point of view, the format of the work produces the effect of lending absolute authority to the author at a time when "authorial authority" is "politically incorrect" in academic circles. Finally, the lack of clear sources tends to depersonalize Native speakers, and the style of presenting a "romantic" Native quotation at the beginning of many of the chapters reinforces some of the very stereotypes that the author hopes to redress.

Native readers may be particularly offended by the first chapter, which begins with a Tlingit origin story, and quickly proceeds to contradict it by endorsing the Western story in which Native peoples came across the Bering Land Bridge. Upholding the latter story devalues Native explanations of origin by discrediting the premises, purposes and methods of history from a Native perspective. In my own experience within Ontario Native communities, the Bering Land Bridge theory is a source of irritation for many Native people. From the time of Columbus, colonial powers have used it to suggest that Native peoples are colonizers much like the Europeans. Although perhaps unintentionally, Ray's use of the phrase, "original explorers and pioneers," undermines fundamental premises of the contemporary land claims negotiations that first inspired him to write this revision of Native history (pp. 1-2). Against this background, his choice of title may even raise the question of appropriation because he is neither Native nor supportive of the title's truth claim.

Similarly, although less controversial, Ray's handling of Native "first contact" stories swiftly leaves the Native explanations of visionary foresight behind and proceeds to the archival "reality" of extensive trade networks in which news carried thousands of miles (pp. 38-45).

On the one hand, demonstrating the existence of extensive Native trade networks effectively counteracts the colonial myth that Native peoples were economically isolated and backward prior to contact. On the other hand, claiming that Native storytellers used visionary claims to "enhance their authority and power," but in truth first learned of Europeans through the trade networks (p. 42), upholds the colonial myth that Native peoples were intellectually backward and their seers were charlatans. In both of these cases of Ray's use of Native narratives, his historian's zeal to document what "really" happened takes precedence over the political consideration of whose story it is to tell.

In reading *I Have Lived Here Since the World Began*, scholars must bear in mind the context in which it was written. Not only does the general ignorance of Native history among Canadians in high and low places tend to reinforce the power of colonial myths in legal, legislative and social actions, but many "average" Canadians strongly resist the diffusion of Canadian national identity that has ensued from the scholarly trend to rewrite Canadian history. As a *Toronto Sun* headline recently declared, "What the public wants from history is a clear statement about 'What is Canada?'" In this view, Native history is one of many "sub-disciplines" that have contributed to a "fragmentation [that] left only a void where the national interpretation had once existed." The columnist further notes that the histories the public favours are invariably those written by popular authors such as Pierre Berton and Peter Newman.⁸ It appears that neither the public at large, nor legal and political authorities, are readily convinced by either cautious scholarly or Native treatments of history, especially if these present alternative stories to those they already "know." It is increasingly apparent, however, that if Native rights continue to be ignored, violent eruptions are the likely consequence.⁹

Although *I Have Lived Here Since the World Began* clearly falls short of the kind of "Native-centred" history applauded by present-day ethno-historians, and called for by the RCAP report,¹⁰ one must ask whether its force in the public realm is not all the more potent for its greater accessibility to a generally hostile lay audience. For this readership, Ray's narrative may succeed in dispelling the myth that Natives are merely members of a "special interest" group who are more privileged than most Canadians. His work demonstrates how, despite Natives' reasonable demands and diplomatic strategies, colonial powers have repeatedly

deprived them of their rightful resources to the present day. In this light, the book may be seen as one of many incremental steps scholars have made towards paving the way for a more equitable relationship between Canadians and Native peoples. Thus, when viewed in context, Ray should be praised for his popularization of

a work into which he poured the substance of his rigorous and thorough scholarly research. Not only does the book serve a practical need within Canadian society, but it also contains rewards for the academic reader. Although material culture scholars will not find citations within its covers, they will likely find inspiration.

NOTES

1. René Dussault, Georges Erasmus et al., *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, vol. 1 (Ottawa: Canada Communication Group, 1996), 32.
2. See, for example, Donald Creighton, *Canada's First Century* (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1970), 26, 53.
3. Diamond Jenness, *The Indians of Canada* (reprint, Ottawa: Minister of Supplies and Services Canada, 1977), 281–282, 307.
4. *Toronto Star*, 20 July 1997, A4; *Globe and Mail*, 20 January 1997, A4, A13; 24 May 1997, D9.
5. For example, *Calder et al. v. Attorney-General of British Columbia* (1973) and *Sparrow v. R.* (1987) were both landmark rulings that recognized inherent Native rights.
6. James Clifford, "Identity in Mashpee," in *The Predicament of Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 331–332.
7. For example, see the approach based on a life-history analogy proposed by Igor Kopytoff in "The Cultural Biography of Things," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); the approach based on the metaphor of objects as actors in performance suggested by Joan Vastokas in "Are Artifacts Texts? Lithuanian Woven Sashes as Social and Cosmic Transactions," in *The Socialness of Things: Essays on the Socio-Semiotics of Objects*, ed. Stephen Riggins (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1994); and the "paths and diversions" approach that traces movements within systems of exchange put forward by Arjun Appadurai in "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value," in *The Social Life of Things*.
8. Doug Owram, "Narrow Circles: The Historiography of Recent Canadian Historiography," in *National History*, quoted in Douglas Fisher, *Toronto Sun*, 27 July 1997, 7.
9. Olive Patricia Dickason, *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples From Earliest Times* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1992), 15.
10. Dussault, Erasmus et al., *Royal Commission*, vol. 1, 35–6, 40–41, 237–8.