Still circulating, slowly working their way in from the periphery, the Native margins in this country: stories, rumours, half-truths, lies, myths. Stories about pipelines, about hydro-electric projects, about the sporadic explosions of violence, about mercury poisoning. Stories that are by-product of, or the sub-plots in a larger pattern of the systematic, continuing oppression of the aboriginal inhabitants of Canada. Somewhere in these sub-plots – as in the case of the two stories you will read about here, the story of a doctor or the story of a uranium mine – we perhaps catch a glimpse of these historical processes in their everyday disguise, as experiences. And, more rarely, a glimpse of how the historical process of dispossessing Native people is resisted on a day-to-day level, of the struggle that life has become in these margins, of the ways Native people find to fight against the Canadian State and international capital.

The two stories reviewed below illustrate, in part, that this struggle spills over the boundary of political economy as we narrowly conceive it, and even over the boundary of culture as that concept is exchanged in Native Studies. The struggle has come to inform every aspect of life, however we might choose to analytically slice it up. So, in one case we hear a story of how medical care in a small Native community is a highly charged, political issue. In the other, of how a large uranium mining project changes (threatens?) the way of life of another community by destroying the environmental basis of traditional Native pursuits. Some of these stories are told well, others badly; but I think we must read them all carefully and learn what we can, piece together what we can, because in some way or another we are all caught in it.

What we know helps to determine that oldest of political questions, whose side we’re on.

Peter Kulchyski teaches Native Studies at the University of Saskatchewan.

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An Error in Judgment: The Politics of Medical Care in an Indian/White Community

by Dara Culhane Speck


Alert Bay, the setting for Dara Culhane Speck’s An Error in Judgment: The Politics of Medical Care in an Indian/White Community, is located on Cormorant Island off the northern tip of Vancouver Island. I read this book the week I returned home to Denman Island, also offshore, midway up the eastern coast of the Island. Like the weather, Speck’s book was grey, cold, and disturbing.

Renee Smith, an eleven-year-old member of the Nimkish Indian Band, died in an Alert Bay hospital of a ruptured appendix on January 22nd, 1979. The author, a Band member by marriage, details the death and the events which followed. There is much more than a mere account of an incident. These include: the ineptitude of the hospital and local health services; the death of a woman from an overdose of tranquilizers; the death of a young man before the arrival of the medical team; the failure of the medical system to respond; neglect of the needs of the patients; and, finally, the death of an elderly man who was left to die on the floor of the hospital. The book is a carefully crafted, harrowing, and harrowing, and harrowing, and harrowing, and harrowing, and harrowing, and harrowing, and harrowing, and harrowing, and harrowing, and harrowing, and harrowing, and harrowing, and harrowing, and harrowing, and harrowing, and harrowing, and harrowing, and harrowing, and harrowing, and harrowing, and harrowing, and harrowing, and harrowing, and harrowing, and harrowing, and harrowing, and harrowing, and harrowing, and harrowing, and harrowing, and harrowing, and harrow
which followed. The book, however, is far more than a mere narrative of events. These include: the death; a coroner's inquest, a provincial inquiry boycotted by the Band; the refusal of the B.C. College of Physicians and Surgeons to revoke the licence of the alcoholic physici- 

an, found responsible for the inquest; the death of another young Indian woman from an overdose of pills; the arrival in Alert Bay of a man posing as a physician; his subsequent arrest and suicide; and, finally, a federal inquiry into health care in Alert Bay. The book is a carefully crafted demonstration of how, exactly, the "political is personal." The author interposes her narrative with background chapters on the White and Native communities in Alert Bay, the history of the community, insights on Kwakwala'wak'awak culture, and the organization and politics of Indian health care in Canada in general and B.C. in particular.

The result is a significant contribution, not only to our understanding of a myriad of issues which confront Inuit Nations in this country, but to feminist methodology, research and critical writing.

Stories about Dr. Jack Pickup are legendary among the B.C. coast. Spec focuses on Dr. Pickup, whose alcoholism, negligence and racist attitudes serve as a vehicle to illustrate the larger historical and political context within which the administration of Indian Af- 

No, we have not been a real doctor but at least he has shown us the kind of treatment we have a right to expect. We came and helped us in our distress. We don't con- 

This will not be an easy book to read, especially for those who have no previ- 

But her treatment of the Indian community is open, honest and refreshing. She does not gloss over the contradictions, conflicts and destructive behaviour of her own adopted people. These are per- 

Frank Turner is Professor of Environmental Studies, York University and Visiting Professor of Social Work, Memos Social Work Programme, Dalhousie University. He has taught and worked with Indian Nations for


Since 1984, Canada has been the largest single producer and exporter of uranium in the Western world. This extraordinary position in the international nu- 

to the test of the uranium mining industry, a struggle against environmental destruction, against ec- 

Butler, Canadian law that has been a central concern throughout the province. Native communities throughout Can- 

Some Native people, impoverished and victimized by misinformation and neglect, Environmental activist are concerned with the effects of radia- 

In many ways Badger's statement represents the core of Miles Goldstick's book. In Wollaston, Goldstick seeks to sketch the structural relationships be- 

The nuclear war begins on Native land. In many ways Badger's statement represents the core of Miles Goldstick's book. In Wollaston, Goldstick seeks to sketch the structural relationships between multinational activities in several different sectors and to explicate the political processes which from the con- 

The political context of the book, this oscilla- 

strain, to descriptions of public meetings and journals of a blockade. A large proportion of the text is made up of direct quotations or transcribed inter- 

In his work of art, this talented woman has succeeded in painting a vivid picture of the present-day situation as it affects the lives of these people. Her story is one of hope and courage, of determination and perseverance, of love and sacrifice, of pain and suffering. It is a story that must be told, for it is a story that will not be forgotten. This book is not only a record of a significant event in Canadian history, but also a testament to the human spirit, to the resilience of the human heart.

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