

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Great Plains Quarterly

Great Plains Studies, Center for

Spring 2007

Review of *With Good Intentions: Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal Relations in Colonial Canada* Edited by Celia Haig-Brown and David A. Nock

C. L. Higham

University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly>



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

Higham, C. L., "Review of *With Good Intentions: Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal Relations in Colonial Canada* Edited by Celia Haig-Brown and David A. Nock" (2007). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 1461.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/1461>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Quarterly by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

With Good Intentions: Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal Relations in Colonial Canada. Edited by Celia Haig-Brown and David A. Nock. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006. x + 358 pp. Photographs, notes, appendix, bibliography, index. \$85.00 cloth, \$32.95 paper.

This collection of essays focuses on a specific group of Euro-Canadians: those who “recognized injustices” and “allied themselves with Aboriginal people who also saw the injustices and were actively resisting them, and worked in a variety of ways to address them.” Yet the authors approach their subjects with a critical eye, realizing many of these efforts were concentrated on aboriginal peoples who missionaries thought adopted “appropriate and/or useful aspects of Christianity, European dress, and settlement into farming villages or business ventures.” Additionally, the authors realize some of the actors in the book “struggle[d] to reconcile their Christian morality with their own desires to get ahead.” Under this rubric of analysis, the chapters analyze such varied people as anthropologist Horatio Hale, aboriginal activist Nahnebahwequa, and the missionaries E. F. Wilson and Emma Crosby. Each chapter provides in-depth background to its specific subject, and most chapters locate the transformation of their subjects within the debates of the time period. The volume thus provides excellent background for anyone seeking to use missionary documents for ethnographic, geographic, or other analysis by helping to decode the biases and inherent holes.

The book’s only weakness lies in its editors’ reticence about the importance of their work. While claiming that they hope these essays encourage others to look at missionaries as important sources, the introduction wastes time treading familiar and not very fertile ground about the history of colonialism and racism. If their audience is truly those who have dismissed missionaries, then they needed to sing the praises of their own essays instead of apologizing for doing “white studies rather than Native studies.”

[Editor’s note: A searchable on-line version of *The Encyclopedia* is now available at < <http://esask.uregina.ca/> >.]

The volume's strength is twofold. First, it uncovers those rare missionaries who bucked the system and fought colonial injustice, even if in limited and biased ways. These exceptions help us understand mainstream actors and their fears and motivations. Second, and perhaps most important, it helps demystify missionaries and the resources they left behind. They are no more and no less biased than other sources, yet social scientists have shied away from them. *With Good Intentions* provides the means to approach missionaries in a critical and balanced manner, and that is its greatest contribution to the field.

C. L. HIGHAM
Department of History
University of North Carolina-Charlotte