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Review of *Gathering Places: Aboriginal and Fur Trade Histories*. Edited by Carolyn Podruchny and Laura Peers.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Gathering Places: Aboriginal and Fur Trade Histories.

Edited by Carolyn Podruchny and Laura Peers. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010. xi + 324 pp. Maps, illustrations, photographs, tables, notes, bibliography, index. \$99.00 cloth, \$37.95 paper.

Gathering Places honors Jennifer S.H. Brown, a leading figure in the Aboriginal history of the Hudson Bay drainage basin. The ten essays and introduction deal with Natives and Native history in the region of Hudson Bay, and *there* is the influence of Professor Brown; otherwise the topics are diverse. The papers have been grouped into several themes, but broadly speaking there are two types of essays. Some use novel as well as more traditional approaches to shed light on aspects of the Aboriginal experience; the others are methodological, dealing with the writing of First Nations histories.

Brown has urged historians to move beyond traditional archival sources; and "Putting up Poles" (Podruchny, Gleach, and Roulette) and "Dressing for the Homeward Journey" (Willmott and Brownlee) do just that. "Putting up Poles" explores the role of lopsticks in the fur trade and Native culture. Lopsticks are trees that have been denuded of their branches except for a tuft left near the top of the trunk. Although it was Indians who formed them, lopsticks acted as route markers for European traders. From their work in the field, the authors have identified the location of surviving lopsticks; they also discuss the place of poles in Native culture. By the time of the fur trade, a central pole was part of Native gift-giving and other ceremonies. Intriguing but left unresolved is the extent to which this aspect of Native culture was domestic or adapted from European practice.

"Dressing for the Homeward Journey" makes use of a special find, the coffins of two young men who died sometime in the late 18th or early 19th century. These youths came from prominent families and were buried in their finery. Willmott and Brownlee itemize the clothing material and other goods found in the coffins, including a variety of silver works, rings, and, at one of the sites, thousands of beads. The remarkable array speaks to the wealth of the Great Lakes Ojibwe and Odawa during the height of the fur trade, and the detail reveals how the items of the fur trade became part of Native cultural life.

Heidi Bohaker's "Anishinaabe Toodaims" is more in the tradition of archival research, but its emphasis is new. Toodaims (totems) have various interpretations, but essentially they are tribes, clans, or other groups below the "nation" level. Taking Peter Jones's 1861 *History of the Ojebway Indians* as her starting point, Bohaker traces the group connections using a variety of approaches: diet, language, stories; but especially novel are the pictographs that became a feature of treaties and other contracts. Rather than mark "x" next to their printed names, Native leaders drew a figure that represented their clan. This could be a bison, a fish (usually pike), or a bird of a specific type. By analyzing these "signatures" in a range of documents, Bohaker provides another mechanism for tracing toodaims.

The other chapters deal mainly with the writing of Native American history. In an autobiographical essay, "Being and Becoming Métis," Heather Devine retraces her personal journey of discovery. Born of a Métis mother and non-Native father, Devine as a child was unaware of her Aboriginal heritage. Her mother had been adopted by non-Natives and was only vaguely aware of her origins. Devine describes how she and her mother traced their ancestry, including their moving interactions with their relatives and the sad failure of the Métis community to accept Devine as one of their own and take full advantage of her abilities. The essay provides frank insights about Natives and Native politics, more compelling because of their source.

Also compelling, but in a way disheartening, is "Edward Ahenakew's Tutelage by Paul Wallace" (David Miller). Ahenakew, a Cree born in Saskatchewan in 1885, was an Anglican missionary priest, but his importance to Aboriginal history is as a chronicler and translator of Native stories. "Cree Trickster Tales" (1929) and *Voices of the Plains Cree* (1973, published posthumously) are part of the canon of Native American folklore. The focus of the chapter, though, is on the correspondence between Ahenakew and Wallace, an English professor at a college in Pennsylvania and champion of Ahenakew's work. Wallace, over a period of many years, urged, advised, and even cajoled Ahenakew to produce more. Ultimately, though, the relationship broke down. Wallace did not understand Native society sufficiently, and Ahenakew's priorities lay elsewhere: with his missionary work, his political activity, and the Cree newsletter he published regularly.

In an afterword, Jennifer Brown describes her approach to Native history and offers advice to researchers. Although some essays deal with specific aspects of Anishinaabe, Cree, Ojibwe, and Métis history, the insights about the interactions between scholars and First Nations communities, and the variety of evidence available for the study of Aboriginal history, will be the principal legacies of this intriguing and useful volume.

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