

Similarly, Burley et al. derived a contemporary lesson from their efforts: "Sadly, as is attested to by our society's persistent acceptance of monetary and individualistic gain over environmental consequences, the lessons of this history have yet to be learned" (p. 138). Despite the very useful information about the Peace River District, there is little effort to relate this research to any of the existing interpretations about Native People and the fur trade. However, the authors belatedly engage Peter C. Newman, seemingly not realizing that his profitable work on the HBC was essentially ephemeral (pp. 24, 34, 60, 68 and 96).

The opportunity to reflect on Native people and the fur trade seems to have succumbed to the reality that "Archaeological fieldwork is laborious, methodical, and slow, and it can lead to long periods of boredom" (p. 40). The placement of an insight by Robin Ridginton concerning the fur trade next to a summary of Hugh Brody's essentially ahistorical work (the impact of mercantile colonialism is dismissed *a priori*) indicates that the authors lack concern about theoretical or conceptual issues that fall within the realm of regional ethnohistory (p. 15). And while Burley, Hamilton and Fladmark give generous credit for the various participants associated with the project, the recounting of their story gets petty at times. We probably could have been spared the long narrative justifying the handing over of a single bright red glass seed bead to a tourist/volunteer (p. 113). The telling of the research story should have been balanced with some evaluation of the existing perspectives of the fur trade and Native people.

Dynamic Traditions: "Cannery Days" Exhibit at Vancouver's Museum of Anthropology.

review by Dianne Newell and Kathleen Paulsen

[Reprinted with permission from *Technology and Culture* 35, no. 4 (October 1994)]

The new approaches to the history of production technology view technological change as a dynamic social and cultural process, one in which class, gender, and race intersect. Recently, these ideas found their way into a temporary exhibit, "Cannery Days: A Chapter in the Lives of the Heiltsuk," at the Museum of Anthropology, University of British Columbia. The curator of this exhibit, Pamela Windsor (now Pamela Brown), is a Heiltsuk woman from the Indian village of Waglisa (Bella Bella), British Columbia; she undertook the project as a component of her graduate degree

in anthropology at the University of British Columbia. Her novel look at the Pacific salmon-canning industry effectively counters the conventional wisdom that Indian working women were merely a "reserve army of labour," powerless victims in traditionally Western, male-dominated, technologically "advanced" enterprises. It also presents a unique understanding of the ancient and continuing relationship between Indian peoples and fisheries.

On the Pacific coast of North America, from northern California to northern Alaska, salmon canneries represented the introduction of factory-based production in Indian territories. The perfection and adoption of high-speed, continuous-processing machinery was a long process in this industry, and in British Columbia (B.C.), adoption of the new techniques was especially slow and geographically uneven. Thus handwork remained a vital component of the canning lines, especially for the remote areas and in processing the premium grades and small or irregular tins. Indian women and their families constituted the bulk of the labour force in the B.C. sector down to the 1960s, when automation, centralization, diversification, and unionization finally transformed the industry and its labour requirements.

Three generations of Brown's family, including herself, have fished and worked in the coastal fish plants of central B.C. Using interviews with community members and photographs collected within the community and in various archives, the exhibit looks at the fishing and fish-processing industry by focusing on the lives and contributions of Indians, especially women, in the salmon cannery built at Namu in 1893. The Namu cannery was a highly successful and persistent operation located in Heiltsuk territory; it was also one of the last of the rural plants to close its doors for good.

Brown responded to the challenge of poor funding and low priority for exhibit space for student projects by setting her text and images in a series of twenty-five 30-inch x 22-inch framed panels (Figure 1), hung two at a time, one above another, on the walls of the museum's lecture theatre. Materials for the panels were already available in the museum workshop, the track lighting was permanently in place in the theatre, and the services of the museum's designers were available to her. The simple elegance of her "framed stories," which contain a narrative voice and selected quotations from transcriptions of the taped interviews, all in large type, with photographs and Native drawings, effectively convey the intimate relationship between the people, the marine resources of their territories, and technology—both old and new, Aboriginal and Western. She says: "By using old photographs to look at the history of canneries like Namu, I was able to gain a better sense of how Heiltsuk women connected their social and family life to their

Cannery Days



A Chapter In The Lives Of The Heiltsuk

Figure 1: "Cannery Days" at the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology focuses on Heiltsuk women in the Pacific salmon-canning industry. Photo courtesy of the Museum of Anthropology, University of British Columbia.

cannery work." The focus of her primary research effort, however, was interviews, which were transcribed and edited, following a strict ethical review process that involved an academic committee and the Heiltsuk community members interviewed, for use in the exhibit. The 250 pages of transcripts are now stored in the Heiltsuk Cultural Centre at Waglisa.

In developing the exhibit, Brown had to reject standard museum practices—the rule about "more photographs, less text," for example—in order to emphasize the importance of words as expressions of oral cultures. Her choice to include at least one quotation from each of the twenty-three people she interviewed, on the one hand, and the limited amount of wall space in the theatre gallery, on the other, determined the precise number of panels in the collection, another break with convention.

The museum, housed in a striking concrete-and-glass structure built in 1976 from a design by Canada's leading architect, Arthur Erickson, attracts visitors to Vancouver from around the world. So successful was this low-budget (approximately \$1,600 U.S.) exhibit among Native and non-Native people that the museum held it over for several months, from spring 1993 until early 1994. The original version is currently travelling to Indian communities and regional museums throughout the coast. The museum has produced a second version, in the form of laminated panels, for touring to schools.

Brown chose this route—a museum exhibit—because exhibits are much more public than conventional graduate theses and she wanted to share this chapter in the lives of her community. She prepared a master's thesis in anthropology that discusses the process of research and museum interpretation associated with this important project.¹ Without a doubt, the exhibit, exhibit process, and the thesis demonstrate the positive and personal aspects of technological change in the lives of one Indian community. The exhibit also is a model of how Indians might work with non-Indian professionals in ways that "maintain dignity and respect on both sides."²

Notes

1 Pamela Brown, "Cannery Days: A Chapter in the Lives of the Heiltsuk" (master's thesis, University of British Columbia, Department of Anthropology and Sociology, 1993).

2 *Ibid.*, p. iii.
