

of Resistance has been a personal journey for me, one that will remain with me for a long time. I am grateful to each writer, each sister who sent in material and offered words of encouragement and hope. Each and every one of you made this collection possible; you are why *The Colour of Resistance* was born. Walk in beauty. [p. 3]

James (Sakej) Youngblood Henderson. *The Mikmaq Concordat*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1997

review by Laurie Meijer Drees

Relations between northeastern maritime First Nations and the French fishers, explorers, traders, missionaries and colonists who arrived to the area in the sixteenth century have been analyzed by numerous scholars. Ethnohistorians including L.F.S. Upton, Harold F. McGee, Ralph Pastore, Calvin Martin and, more recently, Ruth Holmes Whitehead, Bruce Bourque and Harald Prins have attempted to describe the intra- and cross-cultural relations of this early contact period.¹ Of these works, Whitehead's has been the most innovative in its use of oral traditions and material culture from the region in an attempt to offer a new perspective on this past. Henderson's work "The Mikmaq Concordat" is a noteworthy addition to these existing studies, because it also attempts to challenge the standard approach to Algonkian history through use of a multidisciplinary analysis.

In his work, Henderson attempts to present a "new" interpretation of some of Mikmaq history. Specifically, he seeks to correct previous Eurocentric histories of Mikmaq-French relations and to "decolonize" the historical documents pertaining to this Mikmaq past. In doing so, Henderson seeks to "validate Mikmaq worldview and knowledge in its own right, without interference of Eurocentrism" (p. 24) by synthesizing Aboriginal experiences and Eurocentric thought into a new perspective. Henderson desires to give Mikmaq views of this history precedence over the European view, an idea ethnohistorians have struggled with since Calvin Martin openly challenged the ability of Euroamerican historians to write history from an Aboriginal perspective.² Henderson's ultimate aim is to define a "just order between the European discoverers and the Aboriginal peoples" as a way to remedy damages done to Aboriginal peoples by colonialists (p. 25). To accomplish this goal, Henderson combines information from oral tradition – the Putús traditions of the Sante Mawíómi – and European accounts.

The focus of "The Mikmaq Concordat" is a solemn agreement reached between the Mikmaq and the Holy See in 1610. In this year, the Great Chiefs Membertou and Messamouet and their extended families publicly entered into an alliance with the Catholic Church, through sanction of Father Fleche who had accompanied French ambassador Sieur de Poutrincourt to Mikmáki (Mikmaq territory) at Port Royal that year. This agreement, referred to as the Concordat, protected the Mikmaq from French monarchical authority and established a Catholic Mikmaq republic within North America. Through the Concordat, the Mikmaq maintained their independence, yet embraced a union with the spiritual leaders of Europe.

Henderson's text gives the reader ample background on events leading up to the conclusion of the Concordat. In fact, a large portion of the work is devoted to explaining the views of the Church towards Aboriginal people in the New World, as revealed in canon law, papal bulls, and civil codes such as the "Leyes de la Indias." Henderson leads the reader through, what he views as, the historic development of a unique concept of Aboriginal rights within the Church: the doctrine of Aboriginal imperium and dominium, developed by the Dominican, Franciscus de Vitoria. This doctrine was accepted by the Holy See beginning in 1528 and emphasized, among others, two principles. First, that Aboriginal peoples' customary control of and use of the land were more than equal to those of any European authority, and that this authority had to be respected (p. 61-62). Second, that although no one could claim temporal power over Aboriginal peoples, Aboriginal republics could ally themselves with the Church or sovereign for mutual sharing or benefit (p. 65). Aboriginal imperium and dominium – the Aboriginal collective right to exercise their own culture and government, to use the land and resources to their benefit – was viewed by Vitoria as natural law, conferred by God (p. 62).

Only after the complex discussion of canon law and Catholic philosophy as developed in Spain does Henderson return his discussion to the Mikmaq and their relations to the French and the Church. Unfortunately, the leap from the Spanish ecclesiastical history to French colonial history is weak in the book, the connection primarily implied, not proven.

The Mikmaq and the French had been in regular contact since 1604, when Sieur De Monts first arrived in the region of Acadia to settle in Mikmáki. De Monts successfully established trading relations with the Mikmaq in that area, and by 1606 the colony of Port Royal represented an established centre of French-Mikmaq interaction. Although initially, as Henderson explains, there was some conflict between the various Algonkian neighbours because of competition to trade with the Europeans, the end of

the Abenaki War of 1607 saw the establishment of peace between the northeastern tribes through negotiated alliances referred to as the Law of Nikmanin. Despite the existence of a negotiated peace, Mikmaq leaders recognized that the presence of French and English traders within their territory had affected the balance of power in the region, and that relations with the strangers from Europe had to be codified. Mikmaq leaders recognized Europeans could not be avoided, and would have to be engaged in some sort of formal relationship.

According to Henderson, Putuś teachings say Chief Messamouet's solution to this dilemma came to him in the form of a vision called the "Beautiful Trail," which proposed a formal relationship with the French based on ancient prophecy. Mikmaq oral tradition already contained accounts of three crosses given to the Mikmaq for their protection. Under the vision of the three crosses, each cross had a role to play in the future assistance of the Mikmaq, and the sign of the cross became an important symbol and prophecy of Mikmaq survival. As a result, when Messamouet's "Beautiful Trail" envisioned a solution to Mikmaq-French relations through an alliance with the cross – the symbol of the Catholic Church – his solution was entirely in keeping with Mikmaq understanding. By entering into a Concordat with the Holy See, following this "Beautiful Trail," the Mikmaq "would become a Christian government allied with the manitu of Catholic Europe" (p. 84).

Thus allied to the Holy Roman Empire, the inhabitants of Mikmáki could maintain their independence and equality with the European monarchies because they had a spiritual alliance rather than a secular one. This was an important distinction since under Mikmaq tradition no authority could interfere with spiritual matters – spirituality being a gift of the individual. In addition, an alliance with a "keeper of the cross" was viewed by the Mikmaq leaders as fulfilment of ancient prophecy. Baptism was the symbolic acceptance of the alliance by the Mikmaq people. The "Beautiful Trail," or Concordat, promised the Mikmaq their independence.

Henderson's work suggests an intersection of Catholic philosophy and Mikmaq ideology in the creation of the Concordat. Both parties, French and Aboriginal, had an interest in maintaining their independence; the Church sought to adhere to its doctrine of Aboriginal imperium and dominium, while the Mikmaq fulfilled prophecy without compromising their authority within their own region. The Concordat did not authorize any transfer of French jurisdiction over the Aboriginal nations. It was simply an expression of the Victorian doctrine of sharing. Under the Concordat, the Mikmaq considered their leaders equal to the European monarchs, and were secure

in their belief that the agreement ended all suggestion of French authority over Mikmāki.

This state of harmony was short-lived, however. According to Henderson, the arrival of the Jesuits in Acadia in 1611 already challenged the acceptance of Aboriginal imperium and dominium. Henderson claims the Jesuits actively undermined the principles established in the Concordat, and tried to cultivate a subservient relationship between themselves and the Mikmaq. By 1648, the Treaty of Westphalia further destroyed the mutually beneficial arrangement as the idea of nation-states began to dominate European thought, a concept incompatible with Mikmaq notions of sovereignty. Henderson's discussion ends by pointing out how the Mikmaq continue to view the Concordat as significant, and how they desire to see the principles it supported reaffirmed in the present. In his closing paragraph, he states: "The Mawioimi is seeking to clarify its role under the Concordat, and sustain its complementary relationship with the Catholic Church. . . . They are seeking to renew the Concordat and create partnership to protect and enhance their environment and Mikmaq Catholicism. . . . They are asking the Church to keep its promises" (p. 104).

Overall, "The Mikmaq Concordat" is a complex work that provides a broad analysis of limited aspects of Church law and early Renaissance philosophy. It attempts to combine traditional Mikmaq understandings of history with legal history, legal theory, and some postmodern interpretation. The slim volume is artistically presented, and contains appendices and a glossary of Mikmaq terms. The introduction, in turn, consists of a short statement by Kjikeptin Alex Denny, and a brief but very interesting account of Mikmaq origins and culture, by Dr. Marie Battiste. The only illustrations in the book relate to a wampum belt that appears to document the Concordat. The bibliography is limited but, very importantly, recognizes individuals who acted as sources from the Mikmaq community.

The primary strength of this work is its attempt to present an important event in Mikmaq history from a Mikmaq perspective. Ethnohistorians have long striven to understand Mikmaq motivations for their involvement with Europeans, and this work gives the reader insight into Mikmaq views and prophecies that may have informed their decisions to interact with the French. Many previous writers on the subject have focused on economic factors influencing French-Mikmaq relations, while Henderson brings to light the importance of Mikmaq philosophy and spirituality.

Unfortunately, the book is marred by significant weaknesses, some which the editors and publishers could have easily remedied. Nowhere in the work is there a map of the area under discussion. If the book is to be useful

for teachers and students, maps are of fundamental importance. Historic place names in French, English and Mikmaq are difficult to work with when not presented with accompanying maps.

Second, the reference list at the end of the book fails to acknowledge much of the work done by historians and scholars on this period in Mikmaq history. Again, for students of the subject, the book does nothing to orient the reader to the state of Mikmaq written history and the new directions in study this work purports to pioneer. Much of Henderson's work relates directly to existing literature, however this is only minimally acknowledged in the text and reference list.

Thirdly, although Henderson claims to integrate Mikmaq oral traditions and teachings with European texts, there is very little referencing of Mikmaq sources. This hampers the reader from understanding the Mikmaq knowledge Henderson uses. Mikmaq contributors are acknowledged in the reference list, but they are not linked to specific information in the chapters. As a result, the reader is left wondering which parts of the Henderson's interpretation derive from the Mikmaq community, and which are of his own invention and interpretation. What information, specifically, did members of the Mikmaq community contribute? How did Henderson piece together the Mikmaq perspective? Which contributors did he rely on the most, and why?

Finally, the book is not well supported in its claims to post-colonialist and postmodern interpretation. Little of this theory is presented or applied. Naturally it is extremely important to the study of Aboriginal histories in North America that the issue of "perspective" be addressed, since many traditional academic histories have obviously been guilty of ignoring Aboriginal sources, as Henderson has pointed out. This is not a new insight, however, and is something numerous other historians have struggled with. When Henderson claims that "Canadian scholarship has *always* been constructed on the integral foundation of Eurocentric thought and its context" (emphasis added) to bolster the importance of his own perspective, his statement is self-serving, unqualified and untrue, and conveniently lets the author set up a straw-man argument deriding "Eurocentric diffusionism" and what he views as all the literature and sources "contaminated" by it (p. 22). A postmodern scholar should have little difficulty dealing with "contaminated" sources, since the issue of perspective is automatically considered. The brief six pages of discussion of postmodernism and post-colonialism barely enhance the book's thesis by allowing Henderson numerous chances to overgeneralize on the subject.

Henderson's book is a welcome addition to this reviewer's collection,

and it is recommended to those interested in the challenges facing those working with Aboriginal pasts. It is not recommended to those unfamiliar with existing histories nor those seeking an introduction to the subject of the Mikmaq past.

Notes

- 1 For an extensive review of existing literature on Native history in the Atlantic region see Ralph Pastore, "Native History in the Atlantic Region During the Colonial Period," *Acadiensis* 20, no. 1 (fall 1990): 200-225.
- 2 Calvin Martin, "The Metaphysics of Writing Indian-White History," in *The American Indian and the Problem of History*, edited by Calvin Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 27-34.

Sarah Carter, *Capturing Women: The Manipulation of Cultural Imagery in Canada's Prairie West*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997.

review by Dorinda M. Stahl

While many historians continue to grapple with what approach to take regarding the culmination of gender and race, others seem to be making significant strides forward in their attempts at understanding Canada's social and cultural past.¹ Such is the case with Sarah Carter's most recent publication, *Capturing Women: The Manipulation of Cultural Imagery in Canada's Prairie West*. The work, which primarily focuses on the images of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women in the early settlement period, examines the necessity of appreciating these "orchestrated" images of women as inextricably linked binary pairs.

Carter's thesis works well on many levels. First, there is her discussion of white femininity as a racialized category. She suggests that the notion of the "virtuous woman settler" and the "vulnerable, frail and meek woman" is a label constructed to meet the needs of the dominant culture, and that this construction gives credence to the place of women in the prairie west. However, her discussion of white femininity does not end here. Carter maintains that in order to fully comprehend the image of the "Victorian-like" woman on the plains, it is crucial to appreciate the image with which this was, and continues to be, juxtaposed. That is the image of the Aboriginal woman. Carter reiterates the three images that have dominated literature: "the Princess," "the drudge" and "the whore." She suggests that it was these images that not only degraded the position of women in