

Terry Glavin. *A Death Feast in Dimlahamid*. Vancouver: New Star Books, 1998, 232 pp.

Review by Tracey Lindberg, Athabasca University.

The story is the oldest one.

It is a story of feasts, fortitude and fight. It is one from which we can all learn.

*A Death Feast in Dimlahamid* will seem very familiar to those who have read the submissions and transcripts in *Degamukw v. Canada*. The storytelling itself is largely unintrusive, if not somewhat bland. The story details a portion of the struggle of the Houses that live in Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en territories. While no work can encompass the entire struggle, it does seem extremely timely that the work discusses the impact of the Delgamukw decision on the people. In a fight that is "by the people and for the people," it might seem awkward to have a work that is part anthropology and part reporting describing not political strategy but the impact of politics (First Nation and Canadian) on First Nations.

The fundamental question becomes, does this work withstand the test of time. Generally speaking, the work is in accessible and easily understandable terminology. For the most part, those who have lived in Aboriginal communities will find themselves squirming under the microscope since the author determines what information is pertinent to include in the work and what information is less so. The end result is a lengthy discussion of facts and facsimile that, at times, seem to flow of their own accord with no set agenda. It is hard to agree with the *Vancouver Sun's* review of this book. On the book jacket, one of the reviewers of the book wrote:

Shifting gears seemingly without effort, the author moves from anthropology to myth, from politics to history, from personal reportage to legal theory.

Intellectually, the shift is not difficult to achieve, but as with all endeavours, you have to determine if that extra effort is a worthwhile investment.

The characterization of First Nations people as observed and their political struggle an event is not as interesting, poignant or factually true as those discussions of personhood, survival and the impact of colonization that are told in the First (Nation) person. Indeed, if we are to truly understand the stories and comprehend the histories to their full extent

we do actually have to expend energy to eradicate characterization and understand personhood. We have to work to understand that the struggle is ongoing and not an event.

The paradigm shifts in this book, if you choose to follow them, are not as intriguing or as fulfilling as the stories that the book tells *in toto*. In fact, the change in the author's roles (as political observer, anthropologist, reporter, friend) are symbolic of the interesting roles that an outsider to First Nation communities and their fight against invisibility must, and can respectfully, fulfill. That being said, it does not make for easy reading.

Those who are actively involved in Aboriginal communities or who have lived in First Nation communities will find the splintering of the authorial voice (and the commensurate fragmentation of the story of the People) will seem a bit discombobulating. Indeed, switching from the somewhat dreary legal story (Chapter 1) to the well-written and introductory scope of Chapter 2, "The War on the Land," represents the many shifts the reader experiences.

For those with some understanding of traditional laws and ceremonies and the protocol surrounding the same, there is likely to be some discomfort. For some, discussions related to the spiritual and religious ceremonies will seem to border on the edge of respectful following of protocol. As always, such discussions raised questions of the protocol of the Ludkudzii Wus, Xsimwitsōiin, Djogaslee, Axtiizeex, Gyetm Guldoo, Yagosi, Goohlaht, Caspit, Smogelgem and Woos houses with respect to the telling of their stories. Having read many stories and having learnt of First Nations peoples' discomfort and anger afterward, one wonders particularly about the sacred information that is recorded in the text.

As a non-House member, the author is also privy to conversation and discussion that the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en are themselves not likely to be privy to. In his role as reporter, Glavin meets with local non-First Nation people and discusses the impact that the political and legal movement is having on the local population. This may be of interest to some who need to remember the potential volatility and political and other responses of the silent and not-so-silent people feeling aggrieved in land claims struggles.

For those who are new to the notion of First Nation peoples' responses to colonization this work provides a thumbnail sketch of the depth and breadth of these issues and their fundamental importance in the lives of the People. Glavin's informal tone and basic terminology and discussion are a good place for introduction to the context of land struggles between

First Nation and non-First Nation people. The fair and even descriptions of the traditional and historic meaning and basis of the struggle is a fundamentally important one for all people to understand. The work is certainly one that is intellectually available to the masses.

Those who are looking for an view to the particular struggle that served the basis for the Gitskan and Wet'suwet'en legal actions will be able to use the book as a reminder of the fundamental principles upon which the court action is premised. From the telling of the disruptions to traditional lifestyles told to the author in the first person to the stories of traditional wealth amongst the People, the work is laden with gifts for the reader.

Of particular note are the stories related to the Peoples' reluctance in the face of violence to escalate the intensely volatile struggle with industry and individuals who profit from industry in the Gitskan Wet'suwet'en territory (Chapter 10). The grace and adherence to the principles of respect and dignity are well told in this book and are an important lesson for the reader. In the end – and the book certainly makes it clear that it does not record an end to this historic struggle, but an ongoing attempt to listen to all sides – Glavin has done this fairly and thoroughly.

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Joe Kane. *Savages*. Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1999, 258 pp.

Review by Tracey Lindberg, Athabasca University.

The Huaorani Nation is a nation like many in Canada. They are struggling against increasingly mechanized, organized and hostile industries. They assert their independence and fierce nationalism in the face of colonization: foreign government, missionaries, educators and environmentalists. There are two fundamental differences between the Huaorani and Indigenous peoples in Canada: they live in the territory now internationally known as Ecuador and they were untouched by development until the 1990s.

There is a litany of offences discussed in clear and unambiguous terms in this novel: the collusion between church and state (and their role in informing colonist policies through education); the hyper-pollution and disregard for life evidenced in the actions of many multinational oil and gas corporations; and the complicity between all of these forces to usurp, and claim the Huaorani traditional territory. The territory itself is an ecological wonder – the riches that are described in plant and animal