

sion progressed.

The core of this study is the demonstration from the Jesuit *Relations* themselves that the Huron succeeded in using the language of the missionaries to subvert its intended meaning and significance. Although the Jesuits employed a domineering idiom and attitude, they were challenged on many concepts and practices. The very meaning of Christianity became debatable.

Finally, the author affirms that another objective of colonial discourse studies is "to link to the present the categories and themes that served dominance in the past." This is not pursued, of course, although the dichotomies of savage/civilized and Christian/ pagan are mentioned. My own conclusion from reading this thoughtful book is that the Jesuits failed to achieve their objective of colonizing-converting, contrary to Axtell's view, and furthermore that when effective colonization did occur after 1663 the aboriginal peoples were not subdued and dominated by a superior culture and religion but they became the victims of the apocalyptic horsemen: famine, epidemics, exhausting wars.

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J.M. Bumstead. *Fur Trade Wars, The Founding of Western Canada*. Great Plains Publications, Winnipeg, 1999.

Reviewed by Bob Lindsay, University of Saskatchewan

I picked up this book thinking that it might be a significant addition to fur trade history, and given its subtitle, especially Western Canadian history. It might even have something to say about the history of Aboriginal peoples or Canadian history. What a disappointment it turned out to be. If it has little to say about the actual fur trade "wars", it has even less to say about the founding of western Canada, and virtually nothing to add to our knowledge of Indigenous history. It is a partial look at HBC-NWC conflict in the fur trade, a narrow legal history written largely from Lord Selkirk's point of view.

Bumstead regrettably assumes an enormous amount of historical knowledge from the general reader, providing an inadequate context and few examples to substantiate his claims. The arbitrary nature of this historical exercise is shown in the pains taken by Bumstead to show that the

crucial date is 1811, the time of the Selkirk Grant and that the "wars" were a result. But was there not any violence or conflict in the fur trade before 1811? You would never know from reading this book. Furthermore, his bias is evident from the start. For example, he states several times that the NWC was "*absolutely ruthless*" (p24); "*utterly ruthless*" (p25); and "*extremely ruthless*" (p28). But no examples are offered. On the other hand, Selkirk and the HBC engage in "*calculated aggression*" (p164) rather than acts of war, reflecting the fact that Selkirk is Bumstead's hero. Moreover, the writing itself is confused and confusing. What does "*submerged violence*" (p9) mean? Why use "*shock troops*" (p21; p153)? Or "*spin*" (p248)? None of these terms explain anything, but they do suggest a "presentist" bias.

The first indication that there is something wrong is found in the lack of references for the illustrations and maps found scattered throughout the book. This turns out to be in keeping with a "*popular*" approach to history in which footnotes of any sort are forbidden. This "*popular*" history also reveals a Eurocentric bias. While all but ignoring the crucial role of Native peoples in the fur trade, it begins with the fur trading companies and governments. For the remainder of the book, Aboriginal peoples are relegated to an inferior, subordinate position, but most often they are ignored. "*Aboriginal*" as used by Bumstead is a recurring term employed in a vague manner to allude to Indigenous peoples associated with the more important and more clearly defined white traders and corporate leaders. Aboriginal peoples are usually in the background, ghostly reflections of possible threats to Europeans or even their "*cat's paws*", but they are always shadowy, indistinct, never First Nations in their own right, with cultures and histories of their own, let alone an independent role in the fur trade.

At one point Bumstead remarks, that "*the decision-makers in the fur trade had at best a limited and incomplete notion of the other corporate players.*"(p50) The same might be said for Bumstead's view of Aboriginal peoples. Unfortunately, when dealing with Aboriginal peoples, Bumstead can make some appalling statements. For example, the mixed-blood population of the west are condemned as "*sadly deficient in both cultural roots and natural identity.*"(p38) This comment is not followed by any explanation or elaboration, but it seems to be in keeping with Bumstead's point of view of the mixed-blood peoples, who "*were a highly volatile population, simultaneously aggressive and marginalized.*"(p50)

At another point he states that the Selkirk settlers were told that "*the Indians would scalp them all.*"(p113) Given that Aboriginal peoples so seldom figure in the book, this kind of writing only serves to reinforce racial stereotypes.

Instead of digressing to the Pacific coast, as Bumstead does, he would have served history better by including an Indigenous perspective. The Pacific coast digressions may be interesting to some readers but they do not enhance our understanding of the so-called fur trade wars. Nor do these digressions help to explain how the fur trade "*wars*" had such a "*profound effect on the development of western Canada.*"(p34) If this statement is true, it is not explained by this book!

The book does provide some useful legal and corporate information and it includes some interesting history regarding events in England and Scotland. But it is not really enlightening on the fur trade, Indigenous peoples or the so-called fur trade "*wars*".

Indeed, this book raises the question whether the phrase "*fur trade wars*" is at all accurate or useful. The book shows clearly that the conflict was mostly commercial and legal in nature, no doubt a reflection of the sources used in its making. Most often, Bumstead only alludes to violence with very few examples offered to show that it ever amounted to a "*war*". The expulsion of the Selkirk settlers, the capture of Fort William and the ambush at Grand Rapids notwithstanding, there is little in this book to substantiate the title, *Fur Trade Wars*, and even less to support the pretentious subtitle, *The Founding of Western Canada*.

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Curtis Cook and Juan D. Lindau, eds. *Aboriginal Rights and Self-Government*. Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000.

Review by Sarah Pocklington, School of Native Studies, University of Alberta

The editors of *Aboriginal Rights and Self-government* state that the essays in this book, most of which were originally prepared for a colloquium held at The Colorado College, are an "exploration of the progress of the Aboriginal rights movements in Canada, Mexico and the United States." The majority of the contributors hail from the disciplines of po-