

Who are the Metis people, what are their unique values and perspectives, and how are these best perpetuated for the future?

Peggy Brizinski

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This selection of essays presents some of the most significant contributions to the ethnology of the North West Coast. Their significance is three-fold, in terms of topic, style, and content.

First, the collection represents one of only a handful of accessible publications on a wide range of cultural attributes of

the Coast Salish, focussing particularly on the Halkomelem and Straits linguistic groups of the southern Georgia Strait. Second, Suttles is a masterful essayist, whose writing is clear, direct, and precise; here are essays which a non-specialist will have little trouble understanding. Third, these clearly written essays do not suffer from oversimplification, indeed just the opposite. The contents of these essays are substantial; taken as a whole they dispel many inaccurate generalizations of the North West Coast by developing a sophisticated and wide-ranging understanding of Coast Salish economy, ecology, social structure, language, and ideology, and placing these categories within the wider context of comparison with other North West Coast cultures.

The book consists of sixteen essays, originally written between 1950 and 1981, organized into four major parts: "Models of Historic Social Systems"; "Knowledge, Belief and Art in Historic Culture"; "Adaptation and Survival Through the European Invasion"; and "Inferences about Prehistory." In addition, the book features a forward by Michael Kew in which he briefly assesses the importance of Suttles' long career (which began in 1946 and continues today), an appendix regarding the Native orthography used in the book, and a reasonable, if not comprehensive, index. The twenty-four black and white photographs of artifacts, dancers, and informants nicely supplement the text. Suttles also provides an "academic biography" in an introduction in which he recounts his perceived influences on his work and the course of his field work and theoretical interests. Finally, each essay, while remaining unaltered from the original in the text, is expanded "to varying degrees by a series of footnotes and postscripts which contain second (and sometimes third) thoughts in which Suttles responds to better information or criticism, provides citations of alternative and complementary interpretations, and clarifies conceptual ambiguity (the latter exercise is rarely required). In these additions Suttles is not hesitant to identify his own earlier errors (see, for example, pp. 24, 44, 55). These efforts expand the utility of the text since the student or novice is thus exposed to the entire range of debate on many specific issues.

The first section, "Models of Historic Social Systems" includes four essays. "Private Knowledge, Morality, and Social Classes among the Coast Salish" is an insightful analysis of the interplay of these three social variables. In this essay Suttles postulates that there were three distinct classes in traditional Coast Salish society--a large upper class, a small lower class, and a smaller yet slave class. The role of private knowledge (family knowledge of ritual and moral behaviour) is closely articulated with class divisions. The separation between the high and low classes is pre-eminently one of moral behaviour; material wealth was important, but among the Coast Salish one could find many poor but good (high class) families.

The next essay, "Affinal Ties, Subsistence, and Prestige among the Coast Salish," complements and expands on some of the issues introduced in the first, in particular the relationship between class status, the affinal reciprocal exchange network which cross cut many Coast Salish communities, the "potlatch," and subsistence. The function of the systematic exchange of subsistence resources and material wealth between affines and communities "is to be found neither in the expression of the individual's drive for high status nor in the fulfillment of the society's need for solidarity . . . but simply in the redistribution of wealth" (p. 23). But it entails redistribution with an adaptive purpose, for it enables "the whole social network, consisting of a number of communities, to maintain a high level of food production and to equalize its food consumption both within and among communities" (p. 25). Traditional North West Coast societies existed in an environment characterized not by a prodigious Garden of Eden affluence (as many would have us believe) but by significant temporal and spatial variations and fluctuations in available subsistence resources. This essay, combined with the work of A.P. Vayda (whom Suttles acknowledges as a source of inspiration--they were colleagues at the University of British Columbia) stimulated an entirely new approach in anthropology--cultural ecology.

The final two essays in this section, "Variation in Habitat and Culture on the North West Coast" and "Coping with Abundance: Subsistence on the North West Coast," comprise an areal application of ideas contained in the previous essays to the entire North West Coast cultural continuum. In "Variation in Habitat" Suttles suggests that some of the cultural differences found on the North West Coast, particularly kinship systems, status differentiation, and systems of reciprocity, have more to tell us about cultural adaptation to specific ecological niches than historical processes of migration or diffusion. In "Coping with Abundance," a paper originally given at the ground-breaking "Man the Hunter Symposium," convened by Richard Lee and Irvén DeVore in 1966, Suttles applies his notions about adaptations to habitats on the North West Coast to more general ethnological and prehistoric concerns, drawing attention to the important ideological differences (in particular the motivation to achieve and maintain high status through surplus production) which separate many North West Coast cultures from others similarly based on a foraging means of production.

Part II, "Knowledge, Belief, and Art in Historic Culture," consists of three essays. The first, "Space and Time, Wind and Tides," is somewhat disappointing, in so far as it represents a paper which does not live up to its accompanying abstract. Nevertheless, as in most of the essays, Suttles provides us with numerous leads for further productive research, making the piece altogether worthwhile. "On the Cultural Track of the Sasquatch" presents the data Suttles has collected on the subject. In doing so, he also provides us with further insight into Coast Salish ideology, an ideology which does not distinguish between "real" and "mythical," "natural" and "supernatural."

"Productivity and its Constraints," the last essay of Part II, addresses the question "Why did Coast Salish carvers not produce more?" The answer is not a lack of technological or artistic ability; nor is it to be found in the presumed recent arrival of the Coast Salish to the region or a lack of diffusion of artistic traditions from the North. Through an examination of the main

classes of artwork--ceremonial paraphernalia (such as masks and rattles), houses, grave monuments, and implements (such as spindle whorls and spoons)--Suttles links artistic productivity to the ideational system of "power," a system with two main categories: vision power and ritual word power. He argues that how power is obtained, used, and maintained in Coast Salish ideology may act as constraints on artistic production.

Four essays are presented in Part III, "Adaptation and Survival Through the European Invasion." The first examines the early diffusion of the potato among the Coast Salish, not only in terms of historical reconstruction but also by comparing potato cultivation to pre-contact subsistence practices and the implications of this evidence to the relation between foraging and cultivation in general. In the case of the Coast Salish, the introduction of potato cultivation did not require any major socio-economic readjustments to their society, due to the fact that it fit well with a pre-contact root-gathering subsistence practice and an already established sedentary lifestyle. This may have important implications to a more general question of prehistory--"What kind of societies can begin cultivation?" (p. 148)

The next essay is another ethnohistorical enquiry on "The Plateau Prophet Dance among the Coast Salish." Written in 1957, this essay contains an explicit criticism of the then prevalent ethnographic disregard for history, which interprets different patterns of behaviour as exclusive systems, in this case "Native" or "Christian." The result has been the loss of a great deal of information by ethnographers because it was "tainted" by Christian influences and did not represent the "pure" Native culture--as if such an entity ever existed. He also questions the validity of viewing phenomena like the prophet dance as a reactive response to pressures of acculturation by a dominant society and accompanying deprivation. Must we look outside of the culture to explain the prophet dance or were there cultural attributes endemic to Coast Salish society which permitted the rise of authoritarian religious prophets? "Could not deprivation have occurred aboriginally?" (p. 198)

The final two essays of Part III take as their topic winter dance ceremonials. "Spirit Dancing and the Persistence of Native Culture" sets forth to show how the material image of "acculturated" Indians, with their housing, diet, dress, entertainment, and transportation not at all different from European immigrants, is only half an image when juxtaposed with the widespread and vigorous participation in Native ceremonialism in the Gulf of Georgia. These "winter dances," as the ceremonialism are called, represent the conjunction of the two central Coast Salish patterns of traditional behaviour: the first, the socio-economic institution of the potlatch; the second, the cultural ritual of spirit dancing. In "The Persistence of Intervillage Ties among the Coast Salish," Suttles looks more closely at modern spirit dancing as the main means by which inter-settlement relations, traditionally predicated on economic need, have been maintained through to the present. In context, it is an explicit response to a major sociological enquiry (Hawthorn *et al.* 1958) which concluded that Native villages lacked a sense of a cohesive community. "But," Suttles suggests, "perhaps it is rather our concept of 'community' that is too limited," such that we are unable to perceive it (p. 210). The interregional participation in winter ceremonials, canoe races, and other social aggregations, reflect the Coast Salish's own perception of "community." A community is composed not of a group of housing units, but by the members who participate in the ceremonial network--if there is a sense of community among the Coast Salish it must be sought at the level of a multi-village network, not the individual reserve.

Part IV contains five essays regarding "Inferences About Prehistory." Three are heavily influenced by Suttles' extensive linguistic researches, especially with Musqueam, a dialect of the Coast Salish Halkomelem language. They are: "Linguistic Means for Anthropological Ends on the North West Coast;" "The Recent Emergence of the Coast Salish--The Function of an Anthropological Myth;" and "North West Linguistic History--A View from the Coast." They all demonstrate (though most explicitly the

first) that the collection and analysis of materials in the Native language leads to a better understanding of social systems and ideologies. "The Recent Emergence of the Coast Salish" also integrates data from archaeology, physical anthropology, and ethnology, as well as linguistics, to expose several stereotypical "myths" about Coast Salish culture (eg. that it was a recent arrival to the coast, passive, imitative, and unimaginative) which have entrenched themselves into the anthropological literature. Like an earlier critical paper (Suttles 1957), and "Plateau Pacificism Reconsidered," another essay in this section, in doing so Suttles reveals a keen sense of logic, as he dissects the arguments to their initial biases and assumptions, searching for and exposing inconsistencies and outright fallacies, and showing how such hypothetical premises lead us to "limit our horizons and exercise our prejudices" (p. 264).

"North West Coast Linguistic History" examines the contributions of linguistic taxonomy to theories of North West Coast prehistory. In particular, Suttles questions the prevailing notion that the North West Coast was subject to successive waves of immigration from the interior of America, or indeed that the original population of the New World occurred via the ice-free corridor of Beringia. A more efficacious explanation of the linguistic evidence, in which the greatest number of the language stocks of North America are found in territories with a Pacific drainage, would follow Fladmark's (1979) proposition that initial occupation of the continent flowed along the west coast. In this view, North West Coast linguistic diversity is explained as a result of regional differentiation over the course of the Quaternary. The reason why we have no hard archaeological evidence of the antiquity of this occupation may be because we have been looking in the wrong place--rising sea-levels during the Holocene may have inundated the earliest North West Coast settlements, which now lie ten metres or more below the tideline.

The literacy, logic, insight, and suggestiveness of Coast Salish Essays combine to make its reading both painless and stimulating. Thus it is entirely appropriate as an introductory

text for courses in North West Coast Anthropology--a rare resource indeed--particularly for instructors interested in presenting their students with a style to emulate.

In the continuing struggle by a small group of anthropologists to establish the Coast Salish peoples as an autonomous and noteworthy cultural unit on the North West Coast, this collection strikes a vigorous blow against many of the prevailing notions regarding the area's Native societies. On this basis alone it is an important contribution. But researchers will also be presented with numerous leads for further substantial research in the areas of prehistory, linguistics, and ethnology, making the reading of this book doubly worthwhile.

N. Alexander Easton

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The Fur Issue is essential reading for all who are involved or interested in the future of Native culture in Canada, or the future of that large part of Euro-Canadian culture which has roots in the Native culture. Living from the land by hunting, fishing and