James must have drank coal oil along with the homebrew.
When the two men were dead, one of my friends whispered to me,
"That coal oil ate their insides clear away." [p. 85]

The *Indian Act*, of course, made it illegal for Indians to purchase liquor.
It would be remiss of me to leave the impression that Mary John’s life
has been one of unremitting gloom and repression. Looking back from the
perspective of the end of the 20th century and employing the standards of
urban British Columbia, it has been a tough life, full of hard work and
struggles. But it has also been one of accomplishments and, dare I say it,
progress. For example, Mary and her friends pushed the local Indian
Homemakers Association into becoming a self-help institution, concerned
with promoting renewed pride in local culture and tradition. This book
represents one of its manifestations. Mary’s story has been recorded with
simple dignity by Bridget Moran, and I thank her for a job well done.

Bob Galois

**Notes**

1 Kane to Indian Agent, 15 June 1914; Public Archives of Canada, RG10,
vol. 1285, p. 86 - reel C-13903.

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Alan D. McMillan, *Native Peoples and Cultures of Canada: An

_We can only blame ourselves, if we are not involved in anything._

Keeping in mind the above saying by an anonymous Indian elder, this
reviewer, an Aboriginal (Anishinabe) person himself, has attempted to stay
abreast of new materials and texts written about Aboriginal peoples. The
major portion of these writings is usually presented by non-Aboriginal
peoples. This is acceptable, if these writers are attempting to present a
more factual account regarding the participation of Aboriginal peoples in the
development of North America.

Zenon Pohorecky (1988), has written that McMillan’s book is "a joy to
find, this book is already booked for the course on Canada’s Natives that I
have had to teach for decades with no text" [p. 98]. Pohorecky for the most
part concentrates on the structure of this volume rather than the quality
of the work. Pohorecky is accurate in his assessment that the emerging
discipline of Indian/Native Studies is lacking in texts and related materials
that portray Aboriginal people as full participants in the historic
development of Canada.
It becomes the responsibility of both Aboriginal and other scholars to correct the dearth of writing on this important area of interaction between Indians and immigrants to Canada. The author, McMillan, states that the purpose for his book is to "provide an overview of Native Canadian life from the earliest prehistory to modern times" [preface, p. x]. The author has developed the volume using the same divisions, in terms of geo-cultural areas, as previous writers. Each section is preceded by a graphic design in keeping with the cultures of that particular area.

The author must be commended for the amount of research and work that have gone into this volume. By using information garnered from disciplines such as anthropology, ethnography and history, McMillan has attempted to develop an accurate account of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada.

Chapter one introduces the reader to the variety of Aboriginal cultures and languages that exist in Canada. Included in this introduction is the "Metis Nation," along with a brief rationale for their inclusion as an Aboriginal group. The reader is presented with information about using techniques from academic disciplines such as ethnography, anthropology, archaeology, linguistics and ethnohistory. McMillan closes the chapter with an excellent point: "A synthesis of traditional Native knowledge and scientific data gathered by archaeologists may best illuminate the Native past" [p. 18].

Chapter two presents information regarding the earliest arrivals in Canada. The emphasis is on the Bering Strait theory and archaeological evidence to support this theory. Chapters three through ten present information about each of the geo-political areas of Canada. Chapter eleven focuses on the Metis and chapter twelve presents an overview of contemporary issues and concerns facing Aboriginal peoples.

The author's scope is vast both in terms of time and geographic distribution. In contrast, most historians tend to focus their work more narrowly rather than try to cover the broad spectrum that McMillan bravely attempts in this volume.

However, it is this vast coverage of the topic which is one of the shortcomings of the book. By the author's own admission, "No book, however, could fully do justice to the cultural heritage of any group, let alone cover the entire nation" [preface, p. x].

For example, one of the shortcomings of this volume is McMillan's handling of the role of women in Aboriginal societies. Although McMillan has incorporated good photographs in this volume showing men, women and a few children, there is very little mention in the text regarding the role of women in Aboriginal societies. By this exclusion, it may appear that women and children were looked upon as not worthy of mention. In reality, Aboriginal women had many important roles in their society and in the development of Canada. Women were instrumental in such aspects as Aboriginal political development and economics, as in the fur trade.
To illustrate my point, Iroquois women held important positions and roles in the Iroquois Confederacy. The strength of the Iroquois Confederacy was based on the fact that all lineage and heredity was traced through the female. The home unit - the longhouse - and the agricultural fields were owned by the women. They had, in all matters affecting the community, not only equal voting rights but the authority to depose those males who made unwise decisions. The importance of Aboriginal women’s roles is alluded to in only one sentence by McMillan, on page 77, "When a chief died, the senior women in his clan had the responsibility of choosing his successor from the males eligible for the position." McMillan appears to imply that it was the men, rather than the women, who ruled in the socio-political aspects of this group. He states, "The League was governed by a council of fifty chiefs (commonly called Sachems), among whom the principal Onondaga chief held the position of honour" [p. 77]. Aboriginal women need to be given equal recognition for their role in the development of Canada.

Similarly, McMillan presents only brief information about children and youths and their socialization to their respective cultures. In Chapter eleven, "The Metis," these statements appear regarding children and youth: "Such children were raised as Indian, with no separate social group developing. ... In either case, the children were raised as Indian or European. ... As male children frequently followed their fathers into the fur trade, the voyageurs became increasingly of mixed heritage" [p. 274]. There is no direct mention made of female children.

In McMillan’s favour, the narrative style of this volume makes it relatively easy to read, unlike some texts where attempting to understand just what the author is presenting to readers becomes an academic exercise. McMillan, in spite of a few shortcomings mentioned, has made a significant contribution to the developing literature that depicts more accurately the major contributions of Aboriginal peoples to the development of Canada. As such, this reviewer recommends this volume, being aware of the limitations previously outlined, for introductory courses in Indian/Native Studies.

William Asikinack

References

Indian Elder (who wishes to remain anonymous)