

## *The Queen's People: Ethnography or Appropriation?*

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### I. Introduction

Until recently, academics could analyze any aspect of Native culture, from deep spiritual practices to personal family relations, and remain unobserved and unchallenged. Today, however, a new generation of First Nations educators, writers and artists has emerged, schooled in a spirit of resistance. These people no longer ignore the myriad articles, books and films on Native subjects. At a forum held in Vancouver on 13 January 1990, "Telling Our Own Story: Appropriation and Indigenous Writers and Performing Artists," many First Nations people articulated a new perspective on their history. Its essence is "appropriation":

Appropriation is the process by which other people (ethnologists, historians, academics, storytellers, film-makers, etc.) approach Native people and communities for information and then interpret it from their own perspectives and for their own benefit. In effect, they are stealing the Native voice and they are getting away with it. ["Telling Our Own Story," 1990]

Not surprisingly, this challenge is causing a stir. On university campuses, appropriation strikes at the heart of the traditional textbook approach to Native culture. Indeed, the very legitimacy of presenting Native culture by non-Natives is in question. The reaction from within the non-Native community has been mixed, some attacking the new assertiveness as a form of censorship, others applauding it as a legitimate challenge to a history of exploitation and inequity.

In the middle of this controversy comes Peter Carstens and his new ethnography, *The Queen's People, A Study of Hegemony, Coercion, and Accommodation Among the Okanagan of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991). Carstens, a professor of anthropology at the University of Toronto, explains in his preface that the work, based on twelve months of field research in addition to archival research, is "a community study" that grew out of his previous work thirty years earlier

on "Coloured Reserves in South Africa and Namibia" (1991, p. xix).

The present review essay was stimulated this past summer after our reading of *The Queen's People*. At the time we were working on the Neskonlith Indian Reserve, northwest of the area Carstens describes. Like Carstens, we too had spent time in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s in Native communities, among them the Okanagan Band.<sup>1</sup> We were naturally interested in Carstens' account, but were surprised on reading it to find a place that we did not recognize. Inaccurate in its portrayal of these people, the book does deserve analysis for this very reason—not as a reliable ethnography of the Okanagan people, but as a critique of the study process itself, from the new self-critical perspective of appropriation. With the increasing reliance on anthropological and ethnographic "experts" in contentious legal cases involving Native rights, this self-critical peer evaluation is now an essential component of the scholarly endeavour. In this review essay we will examine *The Queen's People* in this light.

## II. Description of the Book

*The Queen's People* is an ethnographic study of one Native community in British Columbia—the Okanagan Indian Band, near Vernon. The objective of the work is to analyze the dynamics of contemporary reserve life in the context of White/Native relations from early contact to the present. The author is especially concerned with how the Okanagan came to live on reserves in the first place, and how their confinement to a reserve has affected them. His overriding concern is to characterize the Okanagan as victims of a hegemonic relationship in which they fit the mould of a peasant "class."

### 1. Historical/Ethnographic Overview

Chapter one opens with an ethnographic overview of early 19th-century Okanagan social structure. Carstens notes that, given the paucity of published material, this summary should be seen as a "structural base" only. According to Carstens, the Okanagan lived in clusters of bands under the tutelage of a chief. Such bands, he explains, often coalesced, giving rise to what he calls "band confederacies." He maintains that the social organization of these groups was stratified (i.e., divided into chiefs, headmen, commoners and slaves) and marked by a preoccupation with wealth, rank and war. Focusing on indicators which could demonstrate the existence of coercive hierarchy, Carstens portrays chiefs as "members of the elite" who were preoccupied with boosting their personal esteem by whatever means was available to maintain office in the face of "rivals and lieutenants." Marriage itself, he notes, was political, as families saw in it a means of acquiring more prestige. Even reciprocal meal-sharing was

interpreted by Carstens as an activity that "commoners" engaged in as a "levelling mechanism" to distinguish them from other high-ranking people, who gave feasts to draw attention to their superior position. Arguing that anthropologists have for too long downplayed the economic value of land to hunter-gatherers, Carstens argues that the Okanagan were never "casual occupiers" of the land. Rather, in their seasonal movements, they regarded themselves as the "sole owners" of their land, to which they were "jealously attached."

Discussions of warfare, battles and weaponry figure prominently in Carstens' ethnographic summary. He suggests that warfare was common to all groups, and that in times of surplus it was even premeditated. During warfare, the Okanagans demonstrated the greatest unity, taking on a tribal character when they united against a common enemy. Carstens notes that warfare is an important institution for understanding the range and dimension of political life, and the potential authority of Okanagan chiefs. The wars he describes occurred with the Shuswap in the early 1700s, and were, he explains, the most notorious and violent. Carstens even characterizes one of the last of the traditional chiefs before the arrival of the white man in the early 1800s, Pelkamulox III, as a megalomaniac, driven by ambition and building on his military strength. Here, Carstens acknowledges that he is challenging the established scholarly opinion—in particular, the work of anthropologist, Verne Ray, who claimed that among the plateau peoples social stratification was based on equality for all peoples.

With this pre-contact base, Carstens moves on in chapters two and three to the impact of the fur trade, the gold rush, missionaries and finally government land policy. Their cumulative impact, Carstens asserts, was determinative. By the mid-1860s, "whether they wished to accept it or not," the Okanagan had fallen "under the hegemonic spell of the white man and his institutions" (1991, p. 52). And they adapted almost naturally their pre-existing preoccupation with status and achievement, now evident in their early dealings with the fur traders, where they were more attracted to luxury goods than to anything else.

Carstens' historical review continues in chapters four and five through the 1860s and 1870s, a period during which the Okanagans became both "reserve dwellers" and wards of the Indian Act. By chapter six, "The Process of Economic Incorporation," Carstens introduces his theory that their culture might be best understood as a "peasant culture," not unlike contemporary peasant cultures of Latin American and parts of Africa. In Okanagan society, Carstens discovers a growing tension between new entrepreneurial "peasant farmers" and "traditionalists" whose world-view was still decentralized, local and largely familial.

Chapter seven profiles a series of Okanagan chiefs (1865 to 1931) noting the conflicts and adaptations of each in the face of the new Indian Act and reserve system. Carstens explains how some, such as Chief William (1879-98) and Isaac Harris (1908-09), were conveniently selected by outside administrators for this office, while others were elected, often in an atmosphere of manipulation. Some, such as Pierre Michel (1912-17?) are portrayed as pawns of the power structure, while others, such as Gaston Louie (1915?-18?), as defiant. It is Carstens' central thesis that during this period a tension developed in the community between the "reactionaries," most of whom lived at the head of the Lake, and the "traditionalists," most of whom lived at Six Mile Creek, which spawned a factionalism that still characterizes community life.

## 2. *The Contemporary Community*

Chapters eight and nine bring the discussion into the contemporary period, and here Carstens seeks to dispel the "romantic myth" of Native communitarianism:

The romantic myth portraying rural communities as close-knit collections of people enjoying warm personal relations and institutional completeness does not apply for the Okanagan reserve "community" as it has evolved, any more than it fits the majority of rural reserves throughout Canada and the various other Indian communities in the Yukon Territory. There is, of course, considerable evidence to suggest that rural farm families generally have never enjoyed idyllic and peaceful lives. [1991, p. 140]

In Carstens' view, the contemporary Okanagan lead "guarded" lives, jealously protecting their private property under the "delusion" that they may one day become wealthy at the expense of a kinsman or neighbour. He also detected rampant factionalism in the community, which he experienced personally and which led him at times to consider abandoning his project altogether. Carstens made this factionalism a focal point of his analysis, arguing that it is a key component of reserve culture that functions "to provide a certain degree of control over personal anger and ideological disjunction" (1991, p. 161).

In Chapter ten, Carstens analyzes the domestic economy of the Okanagan reserve in the 1950s. In his view, an important cultural transition from subsistence farming to wage labour took place at this time. Through wage labour, the Okanagan people, especially women, became preoccupied with bourgeois values and status. This continued into the 1980s, (discussed in chapter eleven), in which Carstens outlines the

growing importance of wage labour in this Okanagan community. In 1953, 42 percent of household income was derived from wages and 30 percent from farming; in 1980, these ratios had changed to 80 percent and 4 percent, respectively. Carstens also examines entrepreneurialism in the context of the reserve, noting its relative lack of success. He also examines the band's role in the financial stability of the community.

Chapter twelve begins where chapter seven left off, the characterization of the succession of chiefs of the Okanagan Reserve from 1932 to 1987. A central theme running through this profile of chiefs is the factionalism described earlier. Chapters thirteen and fourteen examine band government, administration and politics in the context of the amended Indian Act of 1951, looking in some detail at the nature of contemporary leadership—the differing roles and duties of chiefs, councillors and band managers, and how these are defined and constrained by the Indian Act. He focuses on what he calls the "predictably hazardous" position of modern chiefs, who are at the mercy of the main interest groups and factions. Although the chief is expected to lead the people, this is a formidable task, given the "constant criticism for his inevitable failure to create a little utopia in the white man's space" (1991, p. 235). By way of contrast, he describes how the band manager is able to manipulate the wishes and actions of the band council by compulsively following the letter of the law.

Chapters fifteen and sixteen present a cursory historical overview of education and Roman Catholicism, respectively, on the reserve. Carstens notes that the Okanagan value education highly, mainly for its symbol of status, prestige and esteem. By contrast, he explains that church membership is not a symbol of status or esteem among the Okanagan.

### 3. *The Conclusion*

Carstens concludes his book with an overview, "The Queen's People: An Anthropologist's View." Here he reiterates his major conclusions that Okanagan "difference" is not related to their Indianness *per se*, but rather to their social and cultural isolation on reserves, which can more appropriately be described as the equivalent of a peasant community. As victims of a white hegemony, the Okanagan are like peasants elsewhere who "can make few choices in their daily round as to how they should run their lives" (1991, p. 276). More and more, he writes, their reserve is being transformed into "a reservoir of cheap labour and also a location for the unemployed" (1991, p. 277). With the increase in the use of cash, more people, notably women, have cultivated middle-class values, all of which can be related to earlier forms of local stratification. Carstens found that everything, from political power and life-style, to education was

ultimately connected to some form of status-seeking. Such a preoccupation with esteem, prestige and status, he believed, was a cultural reality that had to be reckoned with.

In his concluding paragraphs, Carstens characterizes the two "ideal type models" he believes most non-Natives hold of Native Canadians. One is the racist view, which looks at Indians as irresponsible and lazy; the other is the "noble savage" view, which is a "romantic, semi-academic natural history view derived from 'mothers' knee history'" (1991, p. 289). Overall, Carstens' goal is to overcome such models and convey in their place an image of the Okanagan people that he believes is more realistic.

### III. Review

In its overall intent to understand one reserve community in its historical and contemporary context, *The Queen's People* is praiseworthy. Too many ethnographic studies consider Native "community" too broadly (tribal territory being the usual unit), thereby failing to recognize the individuality of each band or reserve. Carstens' detailed description of the chiefs of this reserve from before White contact to the present provides an interesting historical approach that could be undertaken for other reserves in British Columbia. Similarly, Carstens' comprehensive analysis of Okanagan band politics in its historical perspective fills an important gap in understanding how the Indian Act has affected individual bands throughout the province. Carstens' analysis of the changing economy of the reserve from the 1950s to the present is also informative.

Despite these strengths, the work is seriously deficient as ethnography, presenting at best a partial view of a remarkable culture, and at worst a distortion that reflects the author's selective interests and attitudes.

Take, for example, Carstens' depiction of Okanagan society as stratified and dominated by a wealthy, power-hungry elite. James Teit (1930) is attributed as the main source for this information, yet Teit's comments on this subject stand almost diametrically opposed to those by Carstens. According to Teit, Okanagan society was based on egalitarianism where meeting the needs of each member of the group was paramount, regardless of age, sex or occupation. He asserts that, unlike the coastal peoples, the Okanagan had no hereditary nobility, no clans, no phratries and no societies (1930, p. 261). Leadership was an important part of community life, but it was non-hierarchical and widely distributed throughout the group according to the skills and abilities of specific individuals. Some chiefs were the recognized "chiefs" of work parties. Others were the chiefs of ceremonial activities; for example, oration, prayer or dancing. Shamans were also considered important leaders. Certain others looked after internal matters of the band. These chiefs

were known as band chiefs, and were regarded as the "fathers of the people" whose main job was to set a good example and to keep peace in the group (1930, p. 262). The power of such chiefs, however, was quite restricted. They could not enforce any decrees, as this was done by public opinion. Councils and meetings were generally open, and everyone had a right to speak. Teit concludes, "It was considered the duty of all chiefs, particularly of peace chiefs, to be hospitable, help the poor, show a good example, and give small feasts or presents to the people from time to time" (1930, p. 263). To use Teit to portray Okanagan society as a stratified form of competitive elitism is simply inaccurate.

Carstens' depiction also contrasts with that of anthropologist L.V.W. Walters, who worked among the Sinkaietk or Southern Okanagan in 1930 (Walters 1938). This group, although located south of the border, is related to the northern Okanagan. Like Teit's depiction of the northern Okanagan, Walters described the southern Okanagan society as distinctly egalitarian, devoid of any feeling of class distinction, and one in which every individual was free to make his or her own decisions and to choose his or her own manner of existence within the limitations of the culture pattern of the group (1938, p. 87). Chiefs among this group were also numerous and diversified according to ability. Band chiefs were regarded as the most important persons in the group, and it was their duty to exemplify the virtues of the group (1938, p. 98).

Serious matters affecting the group as a whole were handled by a council composed of the band chief and all the band elders (1938, p. 98). Above all, respect for the decisions of the elders guided the society: "This influence of the elders is the factor in Plateau organization that keeps peace and order. No younger person of good character ever disobeyed the command of any older person" (1938, p. 91). Walters quoted from the writings of fur trader Alexander Ross, who was one of the first non-Natives to spend time with the Okanagan in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Ross' observations corroborate those of Teit:

The government . . . is little more than an ideal system of control. The chieftainship descends from father to son: it is, however, merely a nominal superiority in most cases. Their general maxim is, that the Indians were born to be free, and that no man has a natural right to the obedience of another. . . . [I]t is wonderful how well the government works for the general good, and without any coercive power to back the will of the chief. . . . [in Walters 1938, p. 94]

Anthropologist Verne Ray conducted a wide survey of the cultural

relations of the entire Plateau region throughout the 1930s. Based on this work, which included visits with every Native group in the area, Ray concluded that "wealth and rank are virtually absent" (1939, p. 21), and that equality for everyone was an old and fundamental principle of life (1939, pp. 21, 24, 30). Such findings corroborate the cultural profiles of both Teit and Walters for the northern and southern Okanagan.

In this light, Carstens' view is simply unsupportable. Indeed, a thorough review of Carstens' own primary sources point to the Okanagan as an egalitarian co-operative society, the very interpretation that Carstens dismisses as romantic. For most readers who are unfamiliar with the ethnographies (or the communities themselves), Carstens' work is deeply misleading.

This problem pervades *The Queen's People*. For example, Carstens maintains that the Okanagans harboured a jealous concern for their land. Yet Teit, Walters and Ray present an opposing view. Teit writes that "the tribal territory was common property and free to all the people for hunting and fishing, berrying and root-digging" (Teit 1930, p. 277). Walters writes that "food sites and tribal territory theoretically belong to the tribe, but all friendly tribes are welcome to share the hunting, fishing and food gathering sites at any time" (1938, p. 91).

Carstens' portrayal of warfare also conflicts with his own sources. Interestingly, it was the alleged rivalry between the Okanagan and the Shuswap that drew Carstens into his Okanagan project in the first place. Teit, on the other hand, depicts the Okanagan as a peaceful people. He writes that he did not hear of wars of any Okanagan against the Columbia, Wenatchi, Spokane, Kalispel or other southern and eastern tribes (1930, p. 257). He notes episodes of conflict between the Okanagan and two groups. The first involved the Okanagan occupation of an area around the mouth of the Similkameen River from the "Stuwix," an Athapaskan-speaking group. Hostility between the two groups subsided, however, as they began to intermarry, and no fighting occurred between the two groups in the 19th-century (1930, p. 257). Teit was told of hostility between the Shuswap and the Okanagan—in particular, stories of two attacks the Shuswap made on the Okanagan, probably in the early 1700s. The hostility between the two groups was terminated sometime in the late 1700s when Kwolila, a respected Shuswap chief from Kamloops, travelled alone to the home of PELkamulox, head chief of the Okanagan, to make peace. The latter took Kwolila into his house and kept him as his guest for a long time. When summer came, Kwolila took PELkamulox to the Nicola Valley, where he gave him perpetual use of a large area of his own Shuswap land. The chief took PELkamulox's daughter as his foster child. According to Teit, PELkamulox was the first to see white men (explorers



of the Northwest Company), after which he spent much time travelling about telling others the news of these new people (1930, pp. 265-66). Yet Carstens calls this peacemaker a "megalomaniac."

The extent of Okanagan pacificity is evident in the early contact period. While other Plateau peoples south of the border engaged in wars against the Whites, the Okanagans remained neutral. Even in the 1870s, when they were more alarmed than ever about white encroachment on their lands, they negotiated peacefully under the direction of one of their chiefs, Chelahitsa, of Douglas Lake (Teit 1930, p. 259).

Teit's opinion is again supported by the other earlier ethnographers. Walters' commented that the southern Okanagan were "peaceful people for at least several centuries [who] . . . did not usually go to attack in enemy territory even for revenge" (1938, p. 79). Verne Ray characterized the Plateau culture as generally pacifist, and was reluctant even to use terminology such as "war," preferring instead to use terms such as "extended raid" (1939, p. 39). Whatever the interpretation, the whole issue of "warfare" and "feuding" among the Okanagan clearly deserves more ethnographic and historical study before making the sorts of generalizations that Carstens freely makes.

Compounding inaccuracy in *The Queen's People* is a lack of referencing. Historical and ethnographic description is often presented without any reference to the primary sources from which the information was supposedly drawn. In his profiles of various chiefs, long passages contain hardly a single reference (Isaiah Moses, Chewilah and Pierre Michel, all of whom were chiefs between the years 1865 and 1908). Although Teit's ethnographic summary is acknowledged at the outset as a primary source, there are few references to specific statements in Teit's monographs that would allow Carstens' claims to be verified. Instead, Carstens claims that early Okanagan culture is difficult to reconstruct due to a "paucity of published material," except for the "unimaginative and ideographic" writings of James Teit from the early 1900s.

This statement is simply outrageous. The Okanagan and the larger Plateau culture have been better documented than most other groups, including extensive reporting by Leslie Spier et. al (1938) and Verne Ray (1939). In combination with James Teit, these two sources provide an unusually full picture of traditional Okanagan life. Moreover, James Teit was a thorough and sensitive ethnographer (Wickwire 1991a). Although his work on the Okanagan may not be as full as his masterful work on the Thompson (1900), still it is precise, rich in detail and carefully executed. Teit interviewed widely, not only among the Okanagan, but also among other Plateau peoples in British Columbia, Idaho and Washington. In fact, no other early ethnographer studied the Plateau in as much depth as

did Teit. Teit's political activism also influenced his anthropological work, earning him the trust and respect of Native leaders throughout the Interior Plateau. Although his work was reconstructive, many of his consultants had in fact lived through the latter half of the 19th-century, and could describe the early contact period from their own experience. L.V.W. Walters' account is also similarly grounded in field evidence, which appears throughout the text in the form of native names, short biographical sketches and verbatim testimony. Her consultants could reconstruct the old ways with great clarity. Verne Ray's *Cultural Relations* was based not only on his work on the Sanpoil and Nespelem, but on the years of research, including visits to every plateau group mentioned in his study.

In his preface, Carstens notes that he undertook twelve months of field research in preparation for his book, living with friends, or in a rented trailer. "Only after I had received some instruction in the traditions of the Okanagan from the people themselves, and generally immersed myself in Okanagan life" (1991, p. 3), writes Carstens, did the culture of the ethnographies begin to inspire his own personal understanding. Carstens acknowledges the importance of the field component of his research, but he again eschews any concrete evidence of this. The reader is given no information about his field methodology—the numbers of people interviewed, the interview techniques he employed, the diversity of his daily experience. In the text he makes virtually no reference to the specific individuals within the community who provided him with his information. With such sloppy and essentially disrespectful treatment of his "informants," one simply must take his assertions on faith. The book includes photographs of individuals from the community, several of whom are mentioned in the acknowledgements. For example, Tommy Gregoire is described as "a remarkable political historian," Mary Abel and Mary Louise Powers as individuals "whose exhaustive biographical knowledge spanned at least seven generations" (1991, p. xxiv), Annie Swalwell as "a woman of great influence," Harriet Lawrence as a woman "who loved to dance" and Josephine Saddleman as an employee in the band office for many years. Yet, with the exception of Tommy Gregoire, whose words appear on the last page of the book, *not one of these individuals is quoted or even mentioned anywhere in the text*. Reading this, seeing this, the anger and the passion of "appropriation" begin to rise in even the non-Native reader.

One band member is explicitly acknowledged, however. Dan Logan was Carstens' close friend and landlord during his visits from 1962 until Logan's death in 1988. Logan, as Carstens explains,

. . . used to go out of his way to introduce me to people, acted as interpreter on occasions. . . . Dan Logan had a superb knowledge of the Okanagan language. He was the most talented genealogist in the community, and for me he became an important chronicler of family and kin relationships, especially in the context of reserve factionalism and stratification. . . ." [1991, p. xxiv]

Dan Logan was Carsten's key "informant." A fundamentalist Christian, he was also a very successful entrepreneur on the reserve who had lived off the reserve for long periods and identified strongly with the outside White world (1991, pp. 196-97). In 1978, Logan established "Newport Beach Recreational Park" on his fifty-five acre estate on the reserve, which now houses forty White families in permanent homes, fourteen summer cabins, a campground, a grocery store and, in summer, a "burger cabin." According to Carstens, Logan created a White reserve within the Native reserve. Not only did Native people not live there, but any Native child wishing to swim at his beach had to pay to do so.

In a community where such aggressive entrepreneurialism is not valued, Logan was an anomaly. Carstens' selection of this particular individual to be a primary consultant clearly poses some questions of ethnographic bias. Logan, as Carstens notes, was very interested in status, wealth, family genealogies and factionalism. And it is these very issues, interestingly, which are highlighted throughout *The Queen's People*.

A sexual bias is evident sexually as well. Although Carstens acknowledges that women have always been "aggressively active in every aspect of reserve life" (1991, p. 148), his focus on the formal power structure (i.e., chiefs' lineages and biographies, and band government, administration and politics) is strongly oriented toward male culture. According to Teit, this formal power structure was the one segment of community life in which men played a stronger role than women. Most other areas of community life were structured around informal power relations in which the roles of men and women, although separate, were relatively equal (Wickwire 1991a). By emphasizing the formal over the informal power structure, Carstens offers a distinctly male—and partial—view of Okanagan community life, and so without any acknowledgement of the fact.

### 3. Ethnography as Appropriation

Carstens' depiction of Okanagan community life, both past and present, is darkly grounded in what he calls "realism." In keeping with his view that "few, if any communities are utopian havens of peace and good fellowship" (1991, p. xvii), the Okanagan reserve emerges through

Carstens' writing as a place riddled with factionalism, feuding, poverty and political impotence. More and more, he explains this community is becoming a "reservoir of cheap labour and also a location for the unemployed" (1991, p. 277). As if to dispel the "romantic middle-class notions about the noble savage" (1991, p. 274), Carstens adopts the "peasant model" to describe the Okanagan reserve life. Because of their economic dependence, he sees reserves as peasant communities: it is not their Indianness *per se* that distinguishes the Okanagans from other British Columbians, according to Carstens, but the fact that they are "reserve-dwellers" who, "like peasants . . . , can make few choices in their daily rounds as to how they should run their lives" (1991, p. 276).

In this community study, there is nothing on spirituality, mythology, egalitarianism, womanhood or the other qualities that many have come to associate with Native culture. These are excluded, one suspects, because they belong to the myth of "mother's knee" romanticism (1991, p. 289), despite the fact that at least three independent ethnographers who preceded Carstens depicted just such a culture. Instead, Carstens attributes "difference" in Native cultures not to "Indianness" but to White hegemony. Such a view privileges the authority of the dominant culture to control change, while discounting the power of subordinated peoples to resist and survive.

Here again, a study of Okanagan history reveals that Carstens has been selective in his reporting, overlooking critical examples of the Okanagan as active resisters to White encroachment. For example, between the years 1909 and 1922 in south central British Columbia a unified political movement emerged among all the southern Interior tribes, including the Okanagan. Calling itself the "Interior Tribes of British Columbia," this organization drafted numerous petitions, declarations and memorial statements to achieve a fairer resolution of the land problem. In 1909, the Interior Tribes had agreed to support the Indian Rights Association, a Native political alliance comprised mainly of coastal Indians, and by June of 1916 they had aligned themselves with the Nishga in the formation of a province-wide Allied Tribes of British Columbia. Almost every Native band in the province, including the Okanagan, supported this political organization, whose main objective was to achieve a settlement on their land.<sup>2</sup> Among the participants in a number of strongly-worded statements were Okanagan reserve chiefs Baptiste Logan (1911 and 1912) and Pierre Michel (1913 and 1915).<sup>3</sup> Baptiste Logan was among a delegation of eight chiefs who travelled to Ottawa in January 1912 to air their grievances before the prime minister and the cabinet. Carstens notes that Chief Gaston Louie resisted White domination throughout his tenure as chief in the second decade of this century, but he makes no effort to place this

in the context of the Native political movement at the time.

One of the most distinguished of all the figures in the Native political movement was Johnny Chelahitsa, a Okanagan chief from Douglas Lake. Although Chelahitsa's photo appears on both the cover and page 137, Carstens tells us almost nothing about Chelahitsa's central role in this important Native political resistance movement that dominated the area in the early 1900s. Chelahitsa not only made two trips to Europe on behalf of his people, to air grievances before the Pope and the British monarchy, he also travelled to Ottawa in 1912 and 1916 to voice his peoples' concerns before the prime minister and his cabinet. In *The Queen's People*, all we are told of his political attitudes is the unsubstantiated observation that "he liked to display his British medals, an expression of his admiration for the British monarchy" (1991, p. 138).

In this and numerous other examples, *The Queen's People* is more than inaccurate. It is a whole cultural misrepresentation, and an ideological projection of the author's world-view. It is anything but a portrayal of an "other" culture. Appearing at a time of heightened awareness of the dangers and injustices of anthropological misrepresentation, the book is best understood in this self-reflective light. Stimulated in part by critical arguments of Clifford and Marcus (1986) and Marcus and Fischer (1986), many are critical of the very legitimacy of the traditional "scientific" approach to the study of the cultural "other"; that is, to the very process of objective research. As Murray (1991) explains:

The constitution of the stance of objectivity in the writing of ethnography has been shown to be a rhetorical strategy, which involves the turning of personal into impersonal, the erratic and discontinuous dialogue of fieldwork into the smooth monologic written text. . . . The degree of immersion in native life, the degree of the loss of the white Western subject in the object being studied is, therefore, always controlled by the need to come back, to re-establish objectivity, and to this end the writing down and the recording is crucial. The writing subject creates himself implicitly in his writing as an objective 'man of science,' by constituting his object of study (the people and their ways) stripped of the subjective and personal engagement and dialogue by which he gained what is now presented as knowledge. [1991, p. 132]

In reality, there is no "absolute comprehending of other experience, only degrees" a recognition that demands a critical ability to "co-experience," to translate back and forth between points of view (Marcus and Fischer 1986: 64). With traditional subject-object relations thus discredited,

ethnographies should be re-constituted. As Marcus and Fischer explain, "the experience represented in the ethnography must be that of the dialogue between ethnographer and informants, where textual space is arranged for the informants to have their own voices" (1986, p. 67). Or, as Sanjek explains in his recent book, *Fieldnotes*, anthropologists should pay careful attention to their "fieldwork path" and provide the reader with an explication of their "theoretically guided fieldwork decisions and a description of the path connecting ethnographer and informants" (1990, p. 400).

This critical awareness is not confined to anthropologists, but permeates, indeed is increasingly driven by, the Native community itself. Where anthropologists criticize false "representation," Native commentators decry the appropriation of their "voice." Maria Campbell, Native writer-activist, is a central figure in the so-called Committee to Re-Establish the Trickster. At the forum "Telling Our Own Story," she pointed to the "effects of false images and stereotypes on her community, when the only stories available are those in the inaccurate books written by those who do not know the reality of Native understandings and experiences." ("Telling Our Own Story" 1900, p. 5). Others at the same forum argued that there are "too many white voices speaking as if they are experts about Native experiences. . . ." ("Telling Our Own Story" 1900, p. 13). Much of the criticism was directed toward the academic establishment. As one participant, Robert Matthews, explained, "It's like these academics have clear cut our heritage . . . and now sell it back to us just like those trees. Our culture is a kind of pre-digested pablum" ("Telling Our Own Story," p. 16).

While some advocate that non-Natives should not be involved at all in articulating the Native experience, others suggest that there may be a place for non-Natives, but under very different conditions. Poet Lenore Keeshig-Tobias expresses it well in her recent *Globe and Mail* essay, "Stop Stealing Native Stories" (1990). After illustrating how Native "voices have been marginalized" and their experience misrepresented, she demanded that, "If you want to write our stories, then be prepared to live with us." But this must not be "just for a few months":

Hear the voices of the wilderness. Be there with the Lubicon, the Innu. Be there with the Teme-Augama Anishnabai on the Red Squirrel Road. The Saugeen Ojibwa. If you want these stories, fight for them. I dare you. [Keeshig-Tobias 1900]

Here Keeshig-Tobias is suggesting new terms for Natives and non-Natives rooted in a sense of co-operation and collaboration, in a sympathetic and

activist mutualism.<sup>4</sup> There is thus room for the non-Native, but on a very different basis.

#### IV. Conclusion

In light of these telling developments, Carstens' ethnography must be reconsidered. A field study of a contemporary Native community, nowhere in the book is the voice of the community represented. Without the Native voice present or even acknowledged among his sources, there is no dialogue between himself and members of the community. And without a clear elucidation of the field process that led him to his perspective, the reader has no means of evaluating such an account. We are left to take a second-hand account on faith.

Thus does the "objective" Western scientific approach to the study of culture privilege the researcher to pursue whatever line of argument suits him. The "object" of study is at the researcher's mercy. One clearly sees this at work in Carstens' portrayal of the Okanagan, where his analysis so clearly supports his pre-existing view that few, if any, small communities are integrated collections of individuals enjoying peace and good fellowship (1991, pp. xvii, 140).

What we have here is ideology masquerading as ethnography, and the result is a sociological projection of a White, male, Western world-view onto a culture that simply does not fit that mould. This is a dangerous situation as it is only a few people who can challenge him—those of us who know the ethnographic sources that he uses selectively and, especially, the very few people who are sufficiently familiar with Carstens' field situation. Carstens' chief "informant" cultivated both entrepreneurialism and a strong allegiance toward the White world. Ironically, it was these very shared characteristics that likely attracted Carstens to Logan in the first place, as Carstens felt comfortable with *similarity*, not *difference*. Missing from Carstens' account is the still strong life from the "inside"—the place of births and deaths in the community and the way these continue to reaffirm the larger network of reserve communities throughout the southern Interior; "Indianness" as it is expressed in local rodeos and pow-wows; all-night winter dances and sweat-houses that keep alive a continuing spirituality; the evenings of songs and storytelling; the berry-picking and informal economy based on trading and gift-giving; and the traditional healing ceremonies. Missing are the old photograph albums in every home that chronicle family interconnections and histories. Missing, too, is a view of household freezers containing any number of traditional foods—of salmon, venison, berries and bitter-root. Missing also are oral historical accounts of resistance to White encroachment. One of the most important oversights, however, is the women's point-of-view. The photos

of several prominent reserve women are there—perhaps it gives the book the right look. But their lives, their words, indeed any references to them, are absent.

Most of those who read *The Queen's People* will never have spent time on a Native reserve, and will not perceive the gaps and errors in Carstens' representation. There is strong power in the printed word, but it is Carstens' voice, not the voices of the Okanagan people, that is being heard. Thus is Carstens' analysis wrong and disempowering. It is wrong because, driven by an ideological pre-supposition in favour of economic hierarchical power, Carstens imposes his deterministic vision on the Okanagan. Contrary to the evidence, he concocts a society pre and post contact, of power imposed to manipulate those below. It is disempowering because, ignoring women, ignoring resistance, ignoring the sources, he fails completely to see what is really there—a community resisting. Thus does the ideological wrongness of the pre-existing subject penetrate both the process and substance of study. This is appropriation.

## Notes

- 1 Our work among the Nlaka'pamux of Lytton led to our book, *Stein: The Way of the River* (M'Gonigle and Wickwire 1988); see also *Write It On Your Heart: The Epic World of an Okanagan Storyteller* (Robinson 1989).
- 2 For a broader discussion of the political movement, see Tennant (1990) and Wickwire (1991b).
- 3 Logan is among the chiefs listed in the memorial statement sent to the Hon. Frank Oliver, Minister of the Interior, on 10 May 1911 (Memorial 1911), and he is listed among the authors of a statement presented by the Indian Rights Association of British Columbia, to the Hon. Robert Borden, Prime Minister, at Kamloops, 15 March 1912 (Indian Rights Association 1912). Michel is among the authors of "Statement of Chiefs of the Interior Tribes of British Columbia," presented to the Hon. Mr. Borden, 23 May 1913 (Statement 1913), and is one of the authors of a letter from the Indian Rights Association to the Hon. Dr. Roche, Minister of the Interior, 27 Feb. 1915 (Indian Rights Association 1915).
- 4 For one example of the transformative benefits of such activist mutualism, see M'Gonigle (1989-90).

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