

Indian-European Trade Relations in the Lower Saskatchewan River Region to 1840, by Paul C. Thistle. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1986. Pp. 136.

In his examination of Indian-European trade relations in the Lower Saskatchewan River Region before 1840, Paul Thistle has attempted a strong reinterpretation of some basic fur trade historiography. He makes several arguments. First, he argues that there was a Cree presence on the shores Hudson Bay and in the Cumberland House at the time of first European contact; second, that in the first decades of the eighteenth century the Western Woods Cree "continued to hold the upper hand in strategic power relations" (p. 19). He further maintains that the Cree exploited the conflict between the various fur companies in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to their advantage. It was the Cree who forced the Hudson's Bay Company eventually to place a post at Cumberland House in 1774. More important, he argues that the use of the gun and other items of European material culture did not precipitate "cultural amnesia" amongst the Cree. The Cree continued to be familiar with their traditional ways and Thistle has intriguing evidence to prove his point. Furthermore, he points out that the literature stressing a loss of culture usually emphasizes evidence relating to the Homeguard, those Cree who lived near the posts and who had family ties there, and ignores the interior Cree. Thistle also notes that the fur trade had little impact on the leadership structure within the Native community.

How revisionary are Thistle's views? I would argue that while some specific narrow points might be revisionary, his general thesis that the Cree were in control of their destiny throughout the fur trade period is hardly new. He has ignored Robin Fisher's *Contact and Conflict* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1977) which made the very same points about the impact of the fur trade on the West Coast Native populations. Fisher's contention was that "the fur trade brought only minimal cultural change to the Indians and that it was change that they could control" (p. xiv). What is amazing is that Fisher is not even listed in Thistle's bibliography, while more extraneous sources are.

Thistle will probably argue that the situation on the Pacific Coast bears little relationship to the situation in the Western Interior. If this is the argument, I would reply that it is as relevant as the situation in Virginia, which he uses to bolster his case (B.W. Sheehan, *Savagism and Civility: Indians and Englishmen in Colonial Virginia* (Cambridge, New York: University of Cambridge Press, 1980)).

Most irritating, and this is a complaint I have of anthropologists and geographers turned historians, or historians attempting respectability amongst social scientists, is the tendency to rely on sociological and anthropological methodologies without providing any insight as to why a particular model or insight is appropriate. Jennifer Brown in her *Strangers in Blood* (Vancouver:

University of British Columbia Press, 1980) cites Chie Nakane, *Japanese Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), although she gives no detailed explanation of why she chose this particular model to interpret Japanese society over the others available. Thistle does the same. He cites Pierre L. Van den Berge, *The Ethnic Phenomenon* (New York: Elsevier North Holland Inc., 1981) to gain insight into Native culture but does not even attempt to place the author within his own discipline, much less attempt to discern how he has been used by historians to date. In the new world of interdisciplinary studies it is critical that scholars schooled in a particular discipline make it very clear what the debates are in their discipline and more important in the disciplines from which they are borrowing methodologies. For example, I have seen the writings of Emma LaRocque, a specialist on Native education, on the civilization and savagism dichotomy frequently quoted in Jennifer Brown and Sylvia Van Kirk. She would appear to have become a major figure in the debate as to the most appropriate way to write Native history. Yet Emma LaRocque is not even cited by Thistle. Is Thistle post-LaRocque? Has he ignored her for spiteful purpose? Who knows. The point is that historians are not building on each other's works. The approach to model building is scatter gun.

What all of this seems to indicate is that historians are so busy trying to be respectable social scientists that they do not feel that they can offer insight except from the platform of a model. This is not to say that Thistle does not offer interesting reinterpretations. I suspect however that his insights have not sprung from some undigested sociological model, but rather from his living amongst the peoples of Cumberland House. Thistle should have had more pride and faith in his own life's experience—he did not need to dress it up in the pretensions of sociological theory.

One can pick at Thistle's scholarly apparatus as well. On page 11, for example, he cites primary evidence, but from secondary sources. On page 32 Thistle argues that contact was often limited through the trade window. Yet throughout the book, Thistle argues that there was a great deal of informal contact. One could go on, but that would detract from the fact that this is a reasonably sound book well worth the read. It should be noted that the volume won a regional history prize from the Canadian Historical Association.

Frits Pannekoek
Historical Resources
Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism

A Time for Atonement: Canada's First National Internment Operations and the Ukrainian Canadians 1914-1920, by Lubomyr Luciuk. Kingston: Limestone Press, 1988. Pp. 32.

Concentration camps in Canada, you say? Many would now shudder at the sound of these ominous words, but they actually did exist not so long ago, and under this very name, according to the author of this brief exposé. In August