

UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890. By Robin Fisher.

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3m91901z>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 6(3)

ISSN

0161-6463

Author

Soza, Ramona E.

Publication Date

1982-06-01

DOI

10.17953

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

diverse and geographically separate areas. More than a third of the anthology is given over to two extensive accounts of clan ceremonials—the Fox and the Winnebago.

Tooker noted that her selections were guided by availability which we can appreciate and we should laud both Tooker and her publisher for including a number of long texts, free of radical editing. Still the division into titled chapters suggests that the material has some overall meaningful organization. It could be accurately described as a collection of classic texts generally pertaining to the religions of tribes in the Eastern United States and Canada. It might have been presented simply and clearly as such.

In addition to those already mentioned, the selections include accounts of Iroquoian creation stories, formal speech acts, and ceremonials. Tooker procured a retranslation of portions of Frank G. Speck's monograph on the Delaware Big House ceremony. Included are selections describing the Winnebago Night Spirits Society ceremonial, Menominee bundle ceremonials, and some Cherokee curing, love, and war formulas.

Tooker's introductions to the various selections are fairly general and would have been more useful had they placed the selections more fully in their historical and cultural contexts. This would have taken more seriously the importance of reading and understanding the texts from the point of view of those in the cultures they reflect.

While I do not believe that from these selections alone we may gain any clear view of the spirituality of religious systems of any of the tribes represented or of the large, complex, geographic area, the anthology makes available some of the classic texts that document dimensions of Native American religions and they may introduce us to the richness and complexity of this large area.

Sam D. Gill
University of Colorado, Boulder

Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774–1890. By Robin Fisher. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1977. Map. Illustrations. Bibliography. Index. pp. 250 \$12.50 paper.

This survey history of Indian-White relationships in British Columbia, from the fur trade era to the consolidation of the frontier settlement, is an interpretive study of the contact between two cultures and the effects of one culture on another. Fisher implies the Indians had undergone a cultural change as a result of the contact and it is his intention to examine to what extent transformation occurred and what the conflict involved.

To examine the cultural change that occurred, Fisher's analysis attempts to draw out the essence of this change in a full and impartial study rather than perpetuate the "limited view of the indigenous Canadian," a perception made available by viewing the Indian as a peripheral issue and not a central focus. For a more accurate view, Fisher proposes to "deal with Indian-European relations rather than with so-called Indian history" (p. xiii). He also chooses to ignore Indian history prior to the contact. Also, if one does not examine the traditional past (culture) of the B. C. Indians, it would be difficult to know what changes, if any, occurred. But, nevertheless, Fisher proceeds to discuss the changes that occurred as the Natives confronted various groups.

On a proportional basis, the book is a regional indictment. But the story of the Indian-White relationship in B. C., regarding prevalent moral attitudes as well as political and economic forces, is viewed from the perspective of different groups. No one could be more amoral or influential in Indian affairs than the Governor, James Douglas. His concern and handling of Indian-European relations were dubbed a success in the sense that friendly relationships opened the way for frontier settlement and dominance.

Fisher's treatment is, indeed, more sophisticated and goes beyond the morality issue. It is not simply an Indian versus White version. Rather, it is a subtle tale of economic symbiosis whereby fur traders and shrewd Indian businessmen accommodated one another and mutually benefitted. Therefore, on the whole, the impact of the fur trade on Indian society was constructive and not destructive. But the relationship of the fur trader with the Indians is not representative of that of the miner, settler and government official. Although these groups responded somewhat differently to the Indian, they had similar attributes which disrupted and changed Indian culture. Unlike the fur trader, the settling of the frontier excluded the Indians politi-

cally and economically and eliminated any possibility for mutual cooperation or profit.

Fisher accurately points out that the effects of settlement varied according to the different tribes, because some Indians accepted change more readily than others. The Indians at Metlakatla acknowledged a radical shift in their lifestyle with minimal resistance. However, the change that was affecting them was not a direct result of settlement but came from the missionaries who, unlike the previous groups, had the greatest impact in altering the Indian's lifestyle--because they called for a total transformation of Indian culture.

Fisher's book tells of a particular transformation: that of the Indian-White relationship which metamorphosed from one of partnership, whereby Indians molded the trade to meet their own purposes, to one of adversary in which the Indians and Whites shared no common bonds. The book has some shortcomings by excluding oral and pre-contact tradition and is partial in its conclusions; it is based on a wide variety of written documents and literature and is a tightly written, well organized work composed with insight.

Ramona E. Soza
University of Washington

The Ioway Indians. By Martha Royce Blaine. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979. 364 pp. \$24.95 cloth

This review has two parts, one personal but illuminated by the book and possibly illuminating of it, the other objective and pertaining to the nature of the ethnohistoric as opposed to ethnographic data that went into the book. Personally first, I lived in Iowa from ages five through 18, went to public schools there, never learned who the Ioway were, attended college out of state, eventually became an anthropology professor specialized in Southwest tribes, and still didn't know who the Ioway were until reading Blaine's book for this review. My prolonged non-encounter with the tribe is explained in the first place by their not having made war on the U.S. The regional Indian history we learned in Iowa was limited to wars, primarily the Blackhawk War of 1830 and the Spirit Lake Massacre of 1857. The Ioway