

between the scientific staff and the expedition's leader, Vilhjalmur Stefansson, are documented using published and primary sources. The diary's first entry is 20 September 1913, a day after Jenness left the ice-bound *Karluk* on a hunting trip with Stefansson, Burt McConnell, George Hubert Wilkins, and two Eskimos, Pauyuraq and Acicaq. The *Karluk* eventually drifted westward and sank off Wrangel Island, presumably taking with it Jenness's diary of the first stages of the expedition. Among the expedition staff who remained on the *Karluk* was Henri Beuchat, the French anthropologist who was to be the primary ethnologist for the expedition. He subsequently perished in January 1914 trying to reach land when the *Karluk* sank, leaving Jenness with the primary responsibility of documenting the culture of the Copper Eskimos of Coronation Gulf.

After a forced winter stay in north Alaska, Jenness and fellow southern party expedition members finally made it to their base camp at Bernard Harbor in August 1914, a year late but no less eager to begin their scientific studies. It is from this base camp that Jenness embarked upon his extensive studies of the Copper Inuit of the Coronation Gulf region, which would culminate in the writing of one of the finest ethnographies of any Inuit group: *The Life of the Copper Eskimos* (1922). From my own perspective as an anthropologist working on Copper Inuit ethnohistory, the most exciting part of this book is the period from 13 April to 8 November 1915, when Jenness parted company with fellow expedition members on the mainland to travel for the spring, summer, and fall on southern Victoria Island with several Copper Inuit families. In this respect, Jenness became the first ethnographer to observe and participate in the summer wanderings of an Eskimo group while completely cut off from the outside world. Although Jenness describes these experiences in his book *The People of the Twilight* (1928), the diary account provides many more intimate details of this experience. Not only does Jenness participate fully in the social, economic, and ceremonial life of the Copper Inuit with whom he is travelling, but he also experiences the uncertainty and starvation that are a characteristic feature of Copper Inuit life.

The value of this diary as a primary resource is greatly enhanced by a number of features. The editor has provided detailed maps, occasionally supplemented with aerial photographs, upon which are outlined the author's travels at various stages of the expedition. There are 100 pages of detailed notes in which information in the diary is cross-referenced with the author's published and unpublished records. The editor also provides extensive supplementary information that he has gathered through exhaustive archival research, as well as first-hand fieldwork in the Copper Inuit communities of Holman and Coppermine. (In fact, this reviewer first met Stuart Jenness while the latter was visiting the community of Holman on an information-gathering trip.) At the end of the diary, the editor has included an epilogue, providing an account of the subsequent activities of the author, fellow expedition members, and other persons met in the Arctic. Finally, there are numerous appendices, which include valuable archival information such as arctic collections made by the author, singers of Eskimo songs recorded by the author, photographs taken by the author, identifications of individuals mentioned in the diary, etc.

As one might expect of a 600-page diary, there are many sections that are rather uneventful and tedious to read. What the reader is being exposed to, however, is the raw record of expedition activities, including the laborious daily chores of hunting, cooking, sewing, repairing equipment, and learning the Inuit language. I believe the editor of this diary has done the right thing in deciding against abridgement of the written record. Any attempt to delete what might be perceived as the more tedious passages of the diary would be tantamount to tampering with the historical record. Spread throughout the diary, often amidst rather tiresome comings and goings, are fascinating observations regarding living conditions, the arctic environment, the fieldwork process, personal relations with Inuit and fellow expedition members, and Inuit culture and society.

In sum, *Arctic Odyssey* is a significant contribution to arctic scholarship, expertly edited by the dedicated son of a dedicated and eminent anthropologist. Given the rather high price of this book, I would not recommend it to those uninitiated in the study of Inuit cul-

ture or arctic exploration. For those people, I continue to recommend Jenness's timeless books *Dawn in Arctic Alaska* and *The People of the Twilight*. However, for research libraries and those professionals and amateurs interested in northern cultures and the history of arctic exploration (or the lives of great Canadians) this work is well worth the investment.

REFERENCES

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WHEN THE WORLD WAS NEW: STORIES OF THE SAHTU DENE. By GEORGE BLONDIN. Yellowknife: Outcrop Publishers, 1990. 246 p., map, illus., photos. Softbound. Cdn\$15.95.

The appearance of *When the World Was New* is an event of northern publishing significance. It represents the emergence of a unique literary genre — a collection of written Dene history — presented in a comprehensive, readily understood format. It forms a living link between traditional storytellers and contemporary readers. George Blondin and his family have made a valuable contribution with this attractive volume. Hopefully, it signals but the beginning of an expanding Dene historiography.

These legends of the Sahtu represent the preservation, for posterity, of an art form that could well have vanished in the wake of seismic changes that have occurred in the Decho, or Mackenzie, region during the past fifty years. "Around the 1940's," says Blondin, "the great flu epidemics and the move from bush to settlements had a tremendous influence on the . . . storytellers whose role changed along with all the other major changes in the Dene world" (p. i).

The reader of these stories participates in the historic transformation of traditional lore — part myth, part fact, all true — from the universal wisdom of the spoken word to the irreplaceable richness of the written document. If some spirit is lost in the translation from spoken word to written symbol, it is not the fault of the author. Blondin brings verve to the linear that is closely related to the dynamic of the personal and the verbal. The book is, therefore, a very special gift.

In her foreword, editorial story-collector Georgina Blondin, a daughter to the author, reports that the text began as narrative. It was first shared by George and his now-deceased wife, Julie, while raising their four children. After 15 years of protected possession within the family it comes into the domain of many.

These pieces are not meant to be confined to the pages of a book. They continue to serve best as narratives to be told and retold verbally so that they may be remembered by their audiences. In the first place, they belong to the younger generations of Dene who have lived for some decades bereft of living, traditional storytellers. "Stories are so important to a knowledge of why and where you are going in life," says the author's daughter, "and, more importantly, who you are."

By extension, these pieces are also meant for a wider audience that seeks to feel the pulse and familiarize itself with the heart language of what is arguably the oldest continuing society on the North American continent. Here are myths that have guided and preserved a people for perhaps thirty millennia on Canadian soil. In the process of adding and adapting these stories to Canadian spiritual mythology, the entire nation and its people stand to be enriched.

The text is presented in two parts. Part one, "Tales the Elders Told," provides 127 pages of historic narrative, assimilated and processed through the mind of the author and combined with incidents from his own living recollection. The reader engages a time "when animals could talk." We are introduced to Raven and his questionable antics and associates. We meet a selection of good warriors and healers as well as some bad medicine people. We become privy to ancient prophecies and their modern implication. The first encounters of the Dene with non-natives are relayed from the native perspective. (That aspect and its differing perspective from any non-native rendition of the same initial engagement makes the book valuable in itself.) We discover outstanding elders such as Ayah, a 19th-century Dene seer who was born about the time of the arrival of the first Oblates to the region, and Karkeye, the author's father-in-law.

The final 115 pages provide a biographical introduction to three generations of the Blondin family. Extensive background is given on grandfather Paul (b. 1860), who lived the traditional Dene way. Edward, his son, was born at the turn of the century. It was during Edward's lifetime that the challenges of major life transition confronted the Dene and seriously threatened their traditional ways as well as the social fabric of their communities. Finally, George (b. 1922 near Horton Lake, Northwest Territories) demonstrates how he has attempted to successfully transact the challenge of living simultaneously in two different worlds.

Through these biographies the reader is provided a window on a family with a strong sense of identity. The Blondins are portrayed as grounded in the traditions but open to change and adaptation to new possibilities. The story of family evolution is a balanced and appealing blend.

For this reviewer, one of the most valuable chapters is the author's description of the meaning of the drum and its song. Blondin tells how Dene drum songs were first revealed to the people for use in their circle dances. The following is a special revelation from the Creator, conveyed through what is now a prayerful yet celebrative drum song:

My people, the time on this earth is very short. Be good people, help each other. Work hard; that's part of the order of our Creator. Don't complain. Love one another. Listen to the drum song and live by it.

When the World Was New accomplishes well what it sets out to do, for all of the selected pieces are presented with grace and eloquence. Again, there seems to be minimal loss in the metamorphosis from oral to linear or, for that matter, in the communication between two- and four-legged creatures. Blondin and his editorial aides do a fine job of maintaining human authenticity and the intimacy of relation with the natural world.

A danger signal is the cost of the book. No doubt the publishers have been cautious and they are to be congratulated on the fine quality of production in terms of paper and binding. But if the author's express purpose of accessibility to the young and to interested non-Dene is to be respected, it is axiomatic that future editions be provided more economically.

Blondin would seem to have access to many other stories from the same source as these. It is anticipated that, in time, they will also appear with the charm and vitality evidenced in this first worthwhile attempt.

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notes, glossary, bib., index. Hardbound: US\$50.00, Cdn\$55.00; softbound: Cdn\$22.95.

Anyone who truly wants to understand something about individual native women of the far North should read this wonderfully rich book; so should anybody interested in the nature of oral literature and life histories. It is highly innovative, well organized, and beautifully written. In it Dr. Julie Cruikshank, a non-native anthropologist, collaborates to present the life histories of three Indian elders of southern Yukon — Angela Sidney, of Tagish and Inland Tlingit descent and the last speaker of Tagish; Kitty Smith, who had a Southern Tutchone mother and a Coastal Tlingit father; and Annie Ned, a Southern Tutchone. All three of these remarkable women lived through the cultural and social upheavals and sudden influxes and departures of whites associated with the Klondike Gold Rush of 1896-98 and the building of the Alaska Highway in World War Two. All had exceptionally productive lives, acquiring knowledge and wisdom they were eager to pass on to younger generations. In this book they tell their stories as they wanted them told.

The project that led to this volume actually began in 1974, when younger members of their respective families, recognizing the value of their elders' cultural contributions, asked Cruikshank to record their autobiographies. As the work went on, however, it became apparent that none of the narrators was really comfortable in concentrating solely on biographical facts as construed in Euroamerican culture or in arranging them in the chronological sequence to which Westerners are accustomed and which Cruikshank herself first hoped for. Instead, Angela Sidney and Kitty Smith consistently preferred to intersperse accounts of incidents in their personal lives with well-known stories from the traditional narrative repertoire, while Annie Ned chose to emphasize songs and oratory. In short, the women repeatedly drew on familiar oral forms to tell their life stories — an autobiographical approach that was perfectly clear to those within their own culture, but which is not very obvious to those of another. As Cruikshank writes, "autobiography is a culturally specific narrative genre" (p. x) and "recording a life history in an oral society is a social activity quite different from the solitary exercise of autobiography in a literary society." Cruikshank also gradually came to realize that oral tradition is not just "evidence" about the past but is instead "a window on the ways in which the past is culturally constituted and discussed" (p. 14). In this course of this book the reader too comes to understand just why these Yukon women regarded traditional narrative, song and oratory as integral to conveying their life stories — why Angela Sidney, who was widely recognized as a master storyteller, said, "Well, I've tried to live my life right. Just like a story" (p. 29, 146); why Kitty Smith, an independent and highly competent person, who overcame much tragedy and who was also a gifted raconteur, declared that "My roots grow in jackpine roots" (p. 159); and why Annie Ned, a woman of strong spiritual powers and an acknowledged leader, so forcibly pronounced that "Old-style words are just like school" (p. 263).

Each of the three main parts of the book is devoted to one of the women, and each includes personal accounts about events in her life as well as narratives and songs that the woman counted as specially significant in expressing her life. It was Cruikshank, however, who selected the material from a much greater amount of it and who ultimately arranged it in the sequence in which it is presented. She also introduces each part with immensely perceptive commentaries. These framing commentaries along with her overall introduction and brilliant concluding chapter provide the necessary context for Western readers to understand the answers she so convincingly gives to the question posed at the beginning of the book: "What are story tellers actually communicating?"

Cruikshank does not analyze the poetics of the three native languages involved, since all of the women wished to tell their "stories" in English, thus ensuring that they would be fully understood by their mainly English-speaking grandchildren. But Cruikshank is keenly aware of current concerns with how best to transfer oral texts to the printed page, whether in the native language or in English. The graphic

LIFE LIVED LIKE A STORY: LIFE STORIES OF THREE YUKON ELDERS. By JULIE CRUIKSHANK in collaboration with ANGELA SIDNEY, KITTY SMITH and ANNIE NED. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1990. 404 p., 3 photos, 4 figs., map,