

EDIBLE AND MEDICINAL ARCTIC PLANTS: AN ELDER'S PERSPECTIVE. By ANNA ZIEGLER, AALASI JOAMIE and REBECCA HAINNU. Iqaluit, Nunavut: Inhabit Media, 2018. ISBN 978-1-77227-170-6. 128 p., maps, b&w and colour illus., bib. Softbound. Cdn\$22.24.

As someone who grew up in Iqaluit loving the local tundra, and later studying Inuit ethnobotany, this book is nostalgic and fresh. The beautiful macro photographs of the Arctic plants are so deeply familiar that they conjure up long-forgotten memories of walking along the mountainside in my home community: the feeling of the springy ground under my feet, the crinkly sounds of the land, and the earthy smells of the summer wind with the pine-like Labrador tea. The photography presented in this book is stunning and surpasses any other I've seen.

The text is simple and candidly captures the knowledge of Aalasi Joamie, a well-respected Inuit Elder and author. When reading this book, the reader gets a real sense of walking with her and learning about the plants as she sees them. The authors choose to forgo the need to botanically classify the plants with terminology or scientific nomenclature (mushrooms, moss, and lichens are included as “plants”), and instead they focus on capturing Joamie's Inuit *qaujimajatuqangit* (Inuit traditional knowledge). The book includes a preface and introduction by Joamie, and information about the traditional uses of 18 selected plants. People who are looking for an academic or botanical reference book may be disappointed by this text; however, the authors are clear from the beginning that they never intended this book for an academic audience. The book represents a snapshot of the one Elder's knowledge and is not meant to be an exhaustive list. The anecdotal style and organic structure of the writing make it appealing and accessible to anyone who has an interest in Arctic plants, travel, Inuit culture, or ethnobotany.

I feel that it is also worth noting the importance of this book within a larger context. For thousands of years, iterations of this traditional knowledge were passed on from one generation to the next, carefully learned over a lifetime, trialed and erred by the knowledge holder, and passed onto the next generations to hold. This passing along of oral information forms a chain that reaches back into a time that is completely unavailable to us otherwise. Even a single break in that chain would have left this information long forgotten in the past. This is ethnobotany. This knowledge is special. This legacy of knowledge is brought to light with lovely stories from Joamie's own family—accounts of her with her mother, observing, and learning to recognize and use plants, and notes of how she taught her own children to forage for food on the land. There are beautiful pictures of her mother (p. 10) and daughter (p. 5) who participated in this book.

The information captured here is part of the beginning efforts to turn oral traditional knowledge into written documentation. As the authors note, “We hope that other Elders and knowledgeable community members will

have opportunities to record and share their regional plant knowledge and memories so that a vibrant dialogue of Inuit traditional plant knowledge will be accessible to future generations” (p. 7). In the midst of the tremendous changes going on in the Canadian Arctic and a renewed interest from the next generations, books such as these are a welcome effort to ensure their inclusion in the larger fabric of Inuit traditional knowledge.

*Paleah Black Moher*  
PhD Environmental and Chemical Toxicology  
Ecotox Consulting  
2607 Lincoln Road  
Victoria, British Columbia V8R 6A5, Canada  
[paleah@alumni.uottawa.ca](mailto:paleah@alumni.uottawa.ca)

SAM STEELE: A BIOGRAPHY. By ROD MACLEOD. Edmonton, Alberta: University of Alberta Press, 2018. ISBN 978-1-77212-379-1. 432 p., maps, b&w illus., bib., index. Softbound. Cdn\$39.99. Also available in eBook and PDF formats.

Rod Macleod, Professor Emeritus of History and Classics at the University of Alberta, has written an impressive biography of Sam Steele, a legendary early member of the North West Mounted Police (NWMP)—one of the “originals.” The distinguished historian of Western Canada, with his strong research interest in the late nineteenth century NWMP, has all the necessary credentials to write Steele's life story. In nine clearly presented and thoroughly researched chapters, prefaced with an introduction and concluding with a prologue, Steele emerges as a three-dimensional character, much more lively and realistic, than the self-portrait earnestly provided in his autobiography, *Forty Years in Canada*.

The Ontario-born Steele, both physically strong and courageous, participated in the Great March West of the NWMP. Within a decade in Macleod's words, he “had emerged as one of the chief troubleshooters of the Mounted Police, a man who could act coolly and decisively in an emergency” (p. 61). In the mid-1880s, the law officer supervised the Canadian Pacific Railway in its construction phase on the prairies and western British Columbia, led Steele's Scouts in the North West troubles in 1885, and administered Canadian law and justice in the Yukon during the turbulent days of the Klondike Gold Rush in the late 1890s. Steele's post-NWMP career in the South African War and then in the South African Constabulary, as well as his service in World War I, also receive full review. One puts down the volume with a full overview of the entire career of “one of the most celebrated Canadians of his generation” (p. 26).

The only shortcoming in the author's early pages concerns the absence of an in-depth review of Steele's early formative years. This omission is not in any way the author's fault, for as he points out, “There are almost no