

Daughters of Aataentsic: Life Stories from Seven Generations
by Kathryn Magee Labelle, in collaboration with the
Weⁿdat/Waⁿdat Women's Advisory Council

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lies the beauty and humanity of Radisson's story and Bourrie's masterful telling of it. Radisson's deliberate attempts to get ahead in life, if not his actual lived experiences, are somewhat relatable (and understandable), especially so in an era famously characterized by his contemporary Thomas Hobbes as solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.

Notably for readers of *Ontario History* and for the study of the history of the Great Lakes region in general, Bourrie devotes ample space in *Bush Runner* to showcasing and explaining the intricacies, complexities, and diversity of Indigenous life in seventeenth-century North America. This is, after all, the world in which Radisson operated, a world in which Indigenous peoples were very much regional power brokers and the survival of the colony of New France was certainly not guaranteed. Bourrie's vivid and detailed descriptions of (among other things) Indigenous social norms and behaviour, worldview, political organization and the role of women, ritual and spirituality, concepts of law and justice and notions of war, the division of labour, and agricultural affairs are a most welcome and valuable resource and contribute to scholarship in this area.

Make no mistake about it, Radisson

cuts a flawed figure. Bourrie himself describes Radisson as a con man (147) and a liar (158) and his treatment of Indigenous peoples, of whom many were allies and family, is deplorable at times. Despite finding himself present at pivotal moments in North American and European history and actively attempting to influence related outcomes (the founding of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1670 being one such example), in the end, his value as an observer and documentarian overshadows the weight or lasting impact of any direct actions taken. That may be an unfair opinion but Radisson always seemed to miss the mark, his repetitive attempts at achieving financial security, securing royal patronage or improving social status landing a degree or two from the bullseye. Always close but never quite on the money (literally). Without a doubt, Radisson is one of the more intriguing characters of seventeenth-century North America and by association, Canadian history. His boldness (or is that impulsiveness?) is simultaneously shocking and impressive and his adventures make for great storytelling.

Chris Sanagan, Archivist
Writer and co-creator of Group of 7 Comics

Daughters of Aataentsic

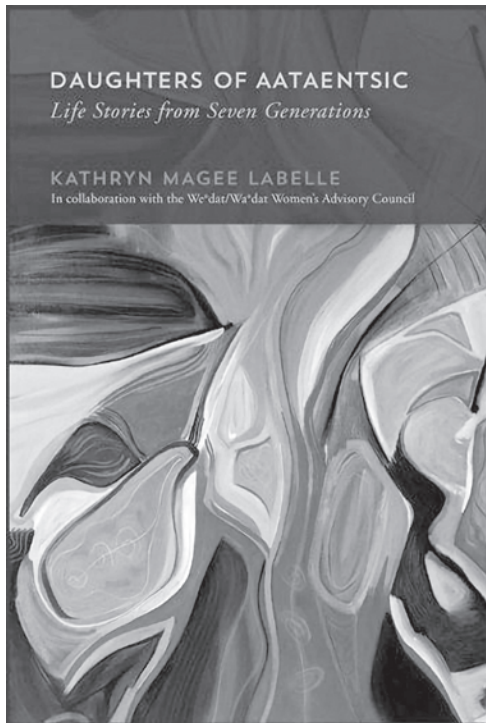
Life Stories from Seven Generations

by Kathryn Magee Labelle, in collaboration with the
Weⁿdat/Waⁿdat Women's Advisory Council

Montreal and Kingston, Ontario: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2021. 210 pages. \$34.60 hardcover. ISBN 978-0-2280-0529-2 (cloth). (mqup.ca)

A number of years ago Peter Clancy and I wrote a book on seven foresters from Nova Scotia. All except one were alive at the time so we had the opportuni-

ty to speak to them and to put their lives into context from archival and secondary sources. Kathryn Magee Labelle has done something much more impressive. She has



put together biographies of seven Weⁿdat/Waⁿdat women, all deceased, whose lives span four centuries and a whole continent. The women's stories are not only pieced together from a variety of historical sources, but also from the collaboration and oral testimony from the Weⁿdat/Waⁿdat Women's Advisory Council made up of eight women from across the Weⁿdat/Waⁿdat Confederacy. These women took an active part in planning the book, including the choice of the subjects, and they also provided their own written accounts at the end of the book. A beautiful painting by one of the women, Catherine Tammaro, forms the cover of the book. All women are part of maintaining the cohesiveness of the Weⁿdat/Waⁿdat from their ancestral origin in southern Ontario to the formation of the Wendake in the seventeenth century and then their dispersal across North America to their current homes in Wendake, Que-

bec, Anderdon, Michigan, Wyandotte, Oklahoma, and Kansas City, Kansas.

Labelle places the book into the celebratory category of Indigenous studies. The book, she writes, "fits into a growing body of literature that redresses the historical conversation from a discourse of destruction to discussions of cultural healing, resistance, and resilience" (5). As such, she avers, it is not her position to criticize her subjects: "We are not there yet; before we can engage with complicating the accomplishments of these women, we must first acknowledge their success" (8).

This is an important point, because there are moments in the book when the readers may question the actions of some of the women. This may apply to Cécile Gannendâris (?-1669), who accepted corporal punishment and patriarchal submission in opposition to Weⁿdat/Waⁿdat values, but only as a way to gain acceptance and respect with the French and Catholic establishment (the hospital, the seminary, and the convent) in light of the desperate situation of her community.

Magee Labelle argues convincingly that such concessions and assimilations into the dominant culture were only means to an end, with the goal to retain the Weⁿdat/Waⁿdat culture. Consistent throughout the biographies, we learn of the close commitment to kinship connections of the women, the "motherwork" they performed, and the deep legacies that the women have left for future generations. In the chapter on Marie Catherine Jan dit Vien (1676-1767) Magee Labelle shows further how the question on who is and isn't Weⁿdat/Waⁿdat is complicated and coloured by colonial discourses. Using broader ways to define belonging, Magee Labelle identifies an extended network of women who supported the formation and fostering of a leadership among the Weⁿ-

dat/Waⁿdat.

There are moving accounts that follow, among them Margaret Grey Eyes Solomon's (1816-90) efforts to stay connected and maintain ties to the Wyandot Mission Church in Upper Sandusky in Ohio, where the Weⁿdat/Waⁿdat once had reservation lands, but were ordered to abandon them as a result of the Indian Removal Act of 1830. Mary McKee (1838-1922) provides an example of motherwork promoting the communal ownership of land, and inspiring a current initiative based on that principle at the Wyandot of Anderdon Nation. There is another account of Eliza Burton Conley Jr's (1869-1946) gargantuan task of protecting the Huron Indian Cemetery in Kansas City, which included a failed appearance in the U.S. Supreme Court, but that nevertheless paved the way for the designation of the cemetery as an American National Historic Landmark in 2017. The cemetery, as in many other cases, constitutes a significant heritage site for the Weⁿdat/Waⁿdat where they buried many of their ancestors who died on their forced migration from Ohio to Kansas and Oklahoma.

The last two subjects, Jane Zane Gordon (1871-1963) and Dr. Élénore Sioui (1924-2006) exhibit motherwork in the context of national and international work that promote the position of Indigenous peoples, especially women, in the global context. Zane Gordon took a prominent role in advocating for the emergence of an Indigenous crafts market while Sioui made an impact at the international scene advocating for Indigenous women's rights. Both women communicated with American Presidents.

Magee Labelle's accounts, along with her earlier book *Dispersed but Not Destroyed: A History of Seventeenth-Century*

Wendat People (2013) remind us that Indigenous paths towards resilience and survival are long-standing and date back generations. She also stresses that there are a variety of strategies used by Indigenous people and individuals in negotiating their position in colonial society, the Weⁿdat/Waⁿdat perhaps choosing acculturation and entrepreneurialism to a greater extent than many other Indigenous communities. Their role as traders, diplomats, and allies of the French and the Church positioned them well to succeed in a dominant society (the first Bachelor's and PhD degrees of Indigenous peoples in North America were obtained by Weⁿdat/Waⁿdat, one among them Élénore Sioui).

For me personally, the book helped me understand my location as a faculty member at the York University Campus whose office sits in an ancestral Weⁿdat/Waⁿdat Three Sisters farm field and who is a close neighbour to an ancestral village. This is a connection I have tried to explore with others, including the research director of the Weⁿdat/Waⁿdat Louis Lesage, in a recent article in *Ontario History* (113:1 Spring 2021). In it, we pose the question on how the employment of Indigenous scholarship could inspire connections between the present Weⁿdat/Waⁿdat communities and the sacredness, living nature, and kinship that is represented by their ancestral villages and ossuaries in the Toronto region. Magee Labelle's book confirms the deep historical connections of the Weⁿdat/Waⁿdat's with their past, a past that includes my university and the Toronto region more generally.

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