

Culture



David NEEL, *Our Chiefs and Elders: Words and Photographs of Native Leaders*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1992, 192 pages, 60 duotone photographs, \$35.95 (hardcover)

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social ideology. Many were arguably as marginal in the North as at home. Marginality likely provided an incentive for many to enter mission work or to go North in the first place. Native peoples were in a position to know such marginal people as well as anyone. Stories of them are an integral part of the oral tradition of Native peoples, as Cruikshank herself has shown. These often astute accounts reflect the *complexity* of northern frontier communities and motivations of frontier people.

This is an arresting and exciting book, with much to admire. It is thoughtful, compassionate, focused in intention, effective in presentation, and goes a long way to achieve the Yukon elders' goals. I was *moved* by it, by the experience of 'reading the voices', and by the evidence of such caring collaboration in research and preparation.

David NEEL, *Our Chiefs and Elders: Words and Photographs of Native Leaders*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1992, 192 pages, 60 duotone photographs, \$35.95 (hard-cover).

By Derek G. Smith
Carleton University

Neel's book is a handsome essay in black-and-white photographs made by Neel between 1988 and 1991 of British Columbia Native chiefs and elders. These are accompanied by verbatim edited transcriptions of statements by those whose portraits appear in the book.

The statements appear in the first part of the book (pp. 11-120), the photographs in the second (pp. 121-183). Statements range from brief paragraphs to several pages, recording a variety of things: traditional oral history; experiences in the Canadian armed forces and in politics; thoughts about the potlatch and the renewal of Native spirituality; the activities of police and missionaries; the pain of poverty and political oppression; reflections on celebrations and victories; and cries of pain about residential schools.

My constant craving was to hear more (some of the statements are so brief), to have a much clearer sense of how the tellers were situated in their social contexts, and to have a more immediate connection between words and photographs.

The photographic portraits of the second part are *stunning* — sometimes emotional, often monumental in grace and dignity, almost always memorable. Many of the subjects are represented first by a photograph in everyday activities and dress, and second by a (usually more formal) portrait in traditional dress or ceremonial regalia. This almost invariable order is problematic too. Neel has a loving and compassionate gaze for his subjects, especially visible in the portraits in traditional regalia. This tends to attract the eye of the reader more emphatically and frequently (clearly intentionally) but detracts from significant representations of people in their day-to-day lives.

There is a perceptive sense of inner character, of dignity and "presence" in subjects lovingly seen and caringly portrayed by a fine artist. Many of the portraits admit the reader to very private moments between photographer and subject. I truly admire Neel's capacity to share these moments without a sense of privacy violated or trust betrayed. It produces powerful images.

While there are difficulties in the book's arrangement, which could have been much more adventurous, one sympathizes with the difficulty inherent in such presentations. Placing verbal material first and visual material second establishes a peculiar emphasis on verbal statements (some rather ephemeral, perhaps), a peculiar contrast to the monumental and enduring sense of many of the portraits. The opposite arrangement could have been equally possible.

Neel's arrangement is intended to emphasize oral tradition. For this reason too the texts "appear as unedited as possible" (p. 11) — fair enough, but many of the statements could either have been yet more judiciously edited for publication, or more fully presented. It would have been possible to offer the portraits (or even more of them) and the statements (considerably lengthened and more deliberately edited as valuable pieces of life-writing) in a more deliberately interwoven presentation so as to maintain their connection.

This is a *very* beautiful book to look at, to touch, and to contemplate — a splendid celebration of the artist's kindly view of his own Native leaders. Its anthropological value is that it blends visual image and word (if somewhat awkwardly in my estimation), provides valuable life-writing by Native persons, and asks us to examine some of the priorities

we normally set in anthropological practice on seeing First Nations peoples and on hearing their voices. Now that it is done for chiefs and elders, I hope the artist will do it for common people.

Elliott LEYTON, William O'GRADY and James OVERTON, *Violence and Public Anxiety: A Canadian Case*, St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1992, 335 pages, \$24.95 (paper).

By D. Kim Rossmo

Simon Fraser University

Violence plays a role on a variety of social stages. From Hollywood films to professional sports, from nightly news to mean streets, violence disquiets many lives. Leyton, O'Grady and Overton examine the issue of public anxiety and violence within the province of Newfoundland in an attempt to answer important and central questions: what is the nature and pattern of criminal violence? Is it increasing? What is the relationship between violence, fear, and danger?

The subject area is topical, the discussions interesting, the styles engaging. The book is divided into three separately written parts loosely tied together through the theme of violence. O'Grady examines the production, nature, and problems of official crime statistics. Leyton analyzes the role of mass media in the communication and popular imagery of violent events. And Overton discusses elements of violence in social reaction to state policy during the 1930s.

O'Grady demonstrates the problematic nature of police statistics in *Criminal Statistics and Stereotypes: The Social Construction of Violence in Newfoundland*. He explains how their production can be influenced by a variety of sources, concluding that they should not be taken as a *prima facie* measure of the "real" level of crime in society. Such influences include changes in legal definitions, differing levels of policing, variations in public attitudes, victim reporting rates (the "dark figure" of crime), the impact of police discretion, and police record keeping practices. Cautioning against such simplistic explanations for crime as "unemployment" and "family breakdown", he concludes that there is clearly no evidence for an increase in violence in Newfoundland.

Unfortunately this chapter, perhaps the most important for the book's thesis, presents its conclusions much too strongly. It seems that the process of raising valid questions about certain conventional wisdoms has been equated with the establishment of scientific proof that such wisdoms are incorrect. While the difficulties associated with official statistics are correct (and have been known for years), consistent increases in uniform crime rates have been documented in most industrialized countries, including the former USSR, and have been supported by alternative measures of crime. Whether such an increase has occurred in Newfoundland is difficult to say as there are no proper tests conducted with the data. Instead there are *post hoc* explanations and more than a few leaps of logic.

For example, O'Grady talks about a doubling of policing levels in the province from 1962 to 1984, but confuses absolute numbers with per capita rates (pp. 36-37). He later states he can demonstrate that changes in sexual assault rates were likely related to the opening of a rape crisis centre - yet never does so (p. 70). He may well be correct in many of his conclusions, but in making his case he uses too many suspect examples.

In *The Theatre of Public Crisis*, Leyton conducts a content analysis of crime news for the province's major newspaper, and then examines the sources of "crime wave" announcements (social agencies, special interest groups, the criminal justice system, etc.). He suggests that such moral panics are rarely the product of conspiracies organized by the ruling elite, but rather are more the result of "a loose and disorganized, often conflicting and contradictory, 'coalition' of groups, professionals, government agencies, politicians, and ideologues" advancing their own particular agendas (p. 111).

Leyton illustrates his case by admitting that he was guilty in the early 1980s of "unjustified speculation" and "unwarranted claims" concerning Newfoundland's violent crime rate (pp. 120-123). He suggests that such fusions of political position with scientific judgement can artificially produce "crime waves", more so when the trend is picked up by other special interest groups for their own particular purposes.

Overton, in *Riots, Raids and Relief, Police, Prisons and Parsimony: The Political Economy of Public Order in Newfoundland in the 1930s*, notes that violent acts embedded in a social, economic, and political context