

Amy E. Den Ouden. *Beyond Conquest: Native Peoples and the Struggle for History in New England* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2005).

Review by A.D.R. Cremer, Macalester College

The cliché that states that history is written by the winners takes on a new twist and reveals pivotal implications for the study of early American and Native histories in Amy E. Den Ouden's *Beyond Conquest: Native Peoples and the Struggle for History in New England*. The winners in Den Ouden's narratives are the self-proclaimed English conquerors of colonial New England, more specifically in Connecticut, following the devastating Pequot War in 1636-1638. In this conflict, English colonists waged an offensive war upon their Pequot neighbors. Though colonial soldiers proclaimed the war "defensive," historians have since shown that the crimes attributed to the Pequots were exaggerated if not completely fabricated.¹

While most histories of this first major military conflict between English colonists and their Algonquian neighbours focus on the war's causes and devote a great deal of time arguing about where responsibility for its bloodshed resides, Den Ouden takes the Pequot War's legacy in an important new direction. The significance of this early colonial war, she points out, lies not in the Pequot War itself, but rather in the ways in which colonial histories were constructed in its aftermath.

Analyses of the discursive power of colonial history and history making have remained on the margins of Native Studies scholarship. *Beyond Conquest* makes clear the importance of correcting this dearth of study. The experience of Native peoples in New England ended, in the minds of colonial architects, with conquest. Facing Native resistance to territorial expropriation in the eighteenth century, colonial leaders actively worked to erode indigenous land claims by rewriting the histories of colonial and native experiences in the seventeenth century. In these histories, Native peoples vanished after having been vanquished in colonial conflicts. The Pequot War figured prominently in such histories as the key event to the English conquest of New England. Den Ouden aptly points out that key "dilemma of conquest" is "legitimacy."² She then delineates the ways in which legitimacy was not simply assumed, but actively produced by Eng-

1 See Alfred Cave, *The Pequot War* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996).

2 Den Ouden, *Beyond Conquest*, 10.

lish colonists. So pervasive were the productions of history, Den Ouden argues, that they have hindered scholars' abilities and continue to obscure interpretations of Native histories from any other perspective.³

One of the central projects of *Beyond Conquest* is that of separating historical wheat from chaff. Den Ouden explicates the discursive hegemony attempted through the production of Anglocentric colonial histories, and her analysis demonstrates the damage that scholars' failure to separate those histories, whose sole purpose was to perpetuate and legitimize conquest, has done to the harvest of historical knowledge. Moreover, she draws forth the hidden histories of Native persistence and resistance in eighteenth-century New England.

Den Ouden's text does not function solely as an act of historical recovery. Instead, she pushes forward a new form of analysis that argues for a reframing of colonialism itself. Rereading sources familiar to those who study colonial New England, including the works of John Eliot, Daniel Gookin, and Eleazar Wheelock, as well as extensive court records and colonial legislation, Den Ouden contrasts the ways in which these sources have been used to support the colonial narrative with interpretations that reveal the active role of Native peoples against the erasure of their rights and history. The case of New England demonstrates the ways in which colonial power is never complete or static. The nature of colonialism is to create and recreate itself in order to sustain its legitimacy.

With great attention to detail, Den Ouden reveals the active, persistent role of New England's Native peoples as they fought to maintain their territorial rights and political autonomy. In direct opposition to the colonial narrative that derives from Indian conquest followed by their absence, Native peoples appeared in courts, petitioned colonial authorities, and maintained autonomous, collective identities throughout the period in which they are said to have "vanished." The Pequot War reappeared in Native petitions not as the moment of conquest, but instead as the beginning of a new epoch in Pequot-English relations grounded in cooperation and alliance.⁴ Native peoples employed the language of colonial treaties to protect their rights. As English colonizers attempted to push Mohegans, Pequots, and other Algonquian peoples out of their homelands, these indigenous communities actively fought to sustain their right to place, property, and political autonomy in New England.

Though the bulk of her text scours events of the eighteenth century, Den Ouden makes clear the connection between the struggle for history

3 Ibid, 17.

4 Ibid, 148-154.

and current Native politics. Concluding her analysis with the battle for recognition and political autonomy in the twentieth century, Den Ouden reveals the ways in which the colonial narrative of history and erasure of Native identities continues to act as an obstacle to the civil rights of indigenous New England peoples. The legacy of colonial “conquest” works in current politics in the guise of white “authority” that lays claim to the right to determine “Indianness” as both racial and cultural categories.⁵

Beyond Conquest offers not only a compelling history of colonial and Native relations in eighteenth century New England, but also a new framework and language by which scholars may and should reassess the ways that we approach the subject of colonialism itself. Den Ouden makes clear that colonial processes do not end with events of military conquest or Indian removal, but remain ever-present in various stages of creation and recreation. Colonial narratives continue to affect the production of scholarship and drive debates about, and decisions regarding, contemporary native political concerns.

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Joanne McCloskey. *Living Through the Generations: Continuity and Change in Navajo Women's Lives* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007).

Review by Rochelle L. Dalla, University of Nebraska-Omaha

The Navajo Nation is one of the largest North American Indian tribes in both geography and population. The Navajo reservation, home to more than 165,000 people, encompasses more than 26,000 square miles and extends across northeastern Arizona, southeastern Utah, and northwestern New Mexico. Like other Native Americans, the Navajo have a rich cultural history influenced by mythology, craft work and tradesmanship, specific patterns of subsistence linked to geography and custom, familial dynamics and kinship networks, and their relationship with the federal government and other non-Native entities. The reader of this book will become acutely aware that many of the unique cultural practices, values, and belief systems of the Navajo have been severely disrupted by the necessity of sheer physical survival due to change and modernization.

⁵ Ibid, 201-208.

Technological advancements, for instance, have largely replaced traditional lifestyles, the medicalization of healthcare threatens traditional healing practices and ceremonies, and the Navajo language is rarely spoken by children or youth, meaning that monolingual Navajo speaking grandparents often cannot communicate with their English speaking grandchildren. Yet, despite such change, cultural continuity also exists. Through the eyes and lived experiences of three generations of Navajo women, Joanne McCloskey brilliantly articulates the juxtaposition of Navajo cultural change and continuity.

As McCloskey explains, Navajo women hold a place of prominence and high regard in a society where motherhood is the central symbol of Navajo social organization. A key Navajo deity is Changing Woman, who represents reproduction and birth, as well as the cycle of life and the power of the earth to provide sustenance. Navajo women are revered for their generative powers, first and foremost, but also for their economic contributions to the family. Because of their highly sanctioned roles within Navajo society and family, women are also significant bearers and transmitters of Navajo culture. Thus, it is appropriate that McCloskey's book, the result of more than a decade's worth of research, specifically focuses on Navajo women.

During the course of her research, McCloskey interviewed seventy-seven Navajo women residing in or around Crownpoint, New Mexico, located in the "checkerboard" area on the eastern edge of the Navajo Reservation. The research was based on interviews with three generations of Navajo women comprising four unique groups: (1) thirty grandmothers beyond childbearing age; (2) fifteen midlife mothers in their thirties and forties who worked in the labour force; (3) sixteen midline mothers who worked in the informal economy (e.g., herding sheep and goats, weaving rugs, craftwork); and (4) sixteen young mothers in their teens and twenties. Each of the seventy-seven women completed at least two interviews with McCloskey, although some completed as many as four. In addition to interview data, McCloskey lived in the community and taught school for a time at Diné College, and so was both participant and observer in all manners of social organization and functioning.

Through her research, McCloskey garnered rich information on a variety of culturally meaningful topics, including patterns of labour (in both the formal and informal economies), education, marriage, childbearing, and ceremonial and religious beliefs and practices. Using examples

from each of the four groups of women, patterns of cultural change and persistence across time are delineated throughout the book with clarity and insight.

McCloskey's consistent integration of direct quotations and poignant stories supplement and support her interpretations of the data, while her ability to synthesize her research with that of other scholars provides the reader a solid foundation for understanding Navajo culture from both a historical and contemporary frame of reference. McCloskey concludes, "Persistent value systems endure across generations despite the vast historical changes" (198). In *Living Through the Generations*, the reader is transported through time and place and cannot help being moved by this rigorously researched, beautifully written testament to Navajo cultural adaptation and resilience.

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Sam McKegney. *Magic Weapons: Aboriginal Writers Remaking Community After Residential School* (University of Manitoba Press, 2007).

Review by Albert Braz, University of Alberta

Sam McKegney's *Magic Weapons* is one of the most significant recent studies of Canadian Aboriginal literature. A hybrid text, it is simultaneously a manifesto on the legitimacy of an "ethical engagement" with Aboriginal literature by non-Aboriginal scholars, such as McKegney himself, and a close examination of "Indigenous residential school survival narratives." McKegney focuses largely on life writings, specifically Anthony Apakark Thrasher's *Thrasher ... Skid Row Eskimo* (1976), Basil H. Johnston's *Indian School Days* (1988), Rita Joe's *Song of Rita Joe: Autobiography of a Mi'kmaq Poet* (1996), and Tomson Highway's autobiographical novel *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (1998). Although McKegney provides insightful readings of those texts, which, he claims, "strategically provoke personal, social, and political change in the service of Indigenous empowerment," he is especially perceptive in his examination of Thrasher's memoir. Having access to Thrasher's original prison writings, he is able to highlight the changes made by the editors of the published text. He is also able to present Thrasher as "a kind of ethnographer" of Canada's non-Aboriginal population. However, McKegney does not ignore the Inuk author's own contradictions, notably that while Thrasher

criticizes white men for abandoning the children whom they produce with Inuit women, he shows little interest in his own offspring.

Among the virtues of *Magic Weapons* is that it manages to be both critically sophisticated and lucidly written. However, one of the most compelling segments of *Magic Weapons* is Basil Johnston's foreword, which alone is worth the price of the book. In his nine-page essay, the celebrated Anishinabe writer and scholar outs himself as a sexual victim of the residential school system, a traumatic experience that has led to seeing himself as "damaged goods," and to have withheld any information about it from his wife for most of his adult life. Tellingly, Johnston testifies that, whereas he was fellated by priests, he was "sodomized by two fifteen-year-old boys." No less significant, although he states that he was "befouled and desecrated" at residential school, he remains extremely antagonistic toward what he terms "self-proclaimed advocates" of survivors of the residential school system. In particular, he resents how such individuals assume "that those of us who attended residential school are incapable of looking after ourselves or of understanding the issues."

Johnston's foreword, however, creates some complications for McKegney. On the one hand, he legitimizes McKegney's project, declaring that *Magic Weapons* has enabled him to discern that his writings, as well as those of Thrasher, Highway, and Joe, "had a much wider and longer lasting influence in the country" than he had realized, and for that reason the book "needs to be read." But, on the other hand, the foreword also illustrates some of the limitations of McKegney's approach. For example, Johnston and Joe often assert that the residential school experience was a complex one, with Johnston noting that some of his former mates consider it the best time of their lives and Joe acknowledging that she entered residential school in an attempt to escape the violence around her. Yet McKegney invariably describes all these writers as "survivors" of the residential school system. That is, he seemingly calls into question the self-assessments of their experiences.

Along the same lines, McKegney is somewhat cavalier about his need to demonstrate the impact of residential schools. He assumes that the schools are at the core of most First Nations ailments, particularly "the epidemic of Aboriginal suicide." However, as J.R. Miller has pointed out, the residential school system "never reached more than a minority of young Indians and Inuit."¹ Basil Johnston further contends that most

1 J.R. Miller, *Reflections on Native-Newcomer Relations*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004, p. 118.

such children were “already hurt” by the time they arrived at residential school.² In light of such observations, the residential school system would seem to be a symptom of a greater problem, not its cause. My criticism is not meant to undermine Sam McKegney’s achievement in his fine book. However, it does underscore that if *Magic Weapons* has one flaw, it is its partial engagement with history, which makes it extremely difficult to fathom why some Aboriginal parents would voluntarily send their children to residential schools, much less kidnap teachers to prevent their leaving those schools.³

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John Roberts. *First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples: Exploring Their Past, Present, and Future* (Toronto: Emond Montgomery Publications, 2006).

Review by Jennifer Davis, McGill University

This information-packed study by John Roberts offers the serious inquirer an opportunity to explore many of the issues relating to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. Issues relating to the land, spirituality, and socio-political issues are juxtaposed with the arrival of explorers, missionaries, and subsequent settlers. Topics covered in this volume include justice, economics, health, treaties, spirituality, trading, and sovereignty, using both historical and contemporary examples. Biographical sketches along with reflections made by both men and women add a personal touch and offset the detailed studies of treaty dispute resolution and socio-economic issues. Many of the discussions are of topical import and lead to errors in judgement being made by those who do not fully understand the issues.

Perhaps a little might have been said to alert the reader to the cycle of abuse leading towards the acts associated with colonization. The impression is that two invading nations, the French and the British, intentionally embarked to displace an already existing people through systematic settlement. While this may be true for some French and some British, I think it is fair to say that, in general, most were unaware of their respective government’s political endeavours. The author outlines

² Basil H. Johnston, *Indian School Days*. Toronto: Key Porter, 1988, p. 7.

³ Bryan Eddington, “The Kidnapping of Sister Sainte-Thérèse.” *Beaver*, December 2002-January 2003, pp. 42-43.

the facts associated with settlers' attempts to forge an existence in what they perceived to be unexplored and uncultivated terrain. The systematic displacement and attempts at assimilation are described in detail from the perspective of both the First Nations and subsequent generations of settlers, and the activities included in each chapter encourage the reader to explore his or her own participation in events that continue to perpetuate misunderstanding.

Though intended for use in the secondary school system, I suggest that such an important text might be considered of value to faith communities and local continuing education, recreation, and health centres. A most appealing and challenging aspect of this resource is the invitation to participate in a dialogue, and I would advocate its use both cross-culturally and inter-generationally. With some careful planning, there are components of this text that might well be ideal for small discussion groups. The sections focusing on spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional health are especially relevant as the diverse people of Canada attempt to come to terms with their heritage.

There are, however, some red flags in this text. A reference to the "rise of the Roman Empire in 2200 B.C.E." calls into question the use of the term "B.C.E." Perhaps Roberts (quoting from his source) might mean before the present time, but in any case the Roman Empire did not begin until after the death of Julius Caesar. Again, some clarification needs to be made with regard to the beginning of Christianity, said to occur in 2000 B.C.E. Additionally, the use of a word such as "evil" might best be put into context within a particular historical understanding of Christian teaching. Certainly, misunderstandings were as prevalent then as today. The code of ethics offers good counsel and includes respect for all, yet on the next page I read what seems to me to be an inconsistency. In a short discussion on the distinction between gender roles, reference is made to "waging war." Perhaps students might be encouraged to reflect on the place of waging war in this code of respect.

In a time when efforts are being made towards healing and reconciliation, this text is to be commended for offering so much data. Only in acknowledging the injustices of the past can the present become the pathway to understanding and, in that, health. I agree that this needs to begin with the young, as they are engaged in the school system, though I would also encourage a wider dissemination of the material as a study guide for small groups of all ages.

Lynn Whidden. *Essential Song: Three Decades of Northern Cree Music* (Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007).

Review by Paula Conlon, University of Oklahoma

Essential Song: Three Decades of Northern Cree Music grew out of Lynn Whidden's own life experiences as a teacher in northern Quebec and Manitoba from the early 1970s to 2000. The book is organized by song genres, with post-contact genres presented in the order that the Cree received them. Whidden begins with northern Cree hunting songs, first sung before contact with Europeans and then co-existing with European hymns. She then discusses gospel songs, which largely supplanted the hunting songs and the old hymns. Next, she looks at the country tunes popular across Canada's North, and concludes with a discussion of pow-wow music in northern Manitoba.

Whidden states that the book's title, *Essential Song*, reflects the Cree devotion to, and affinity for, the realm of sound, and their belief that music is an imperative. She notes that, historically, to the Cree, the value of a song was in its correct use, and music, like all natural phenomena, made sense only in its context. Whidden's primary goal for this book is to show the fundamental place of song in subarctic hunting life, emphasizing the context and function of songs and song-making as much as the music itself.

Whidden begins the book with musical profiles of the singers on the accompanying compact disc, which is made up of fifty-two songs recorded in northern Quebec in 1982 and 1984 with support from the National Museum Urgent Ethnology Program. Appendix II provides the texts, topics, and commentary for the music from the field notes, while musical transcriptions of a few songs on the CD are interspersed in the book. How I longed for an Appendix III with musical transcriptions and the text underneath in Cree and in English for all of the songs on the CD to compare side by side. What a wealth of information would have been at this eager reader's disposal to obtain an even better understanding of the songs.

In the chapter titled "Song and Ceremony," Whidden discusses the Cree drum and rattle, the Goose Dance, healing songs, songs in hunting ceremonies, and songs about the Shaking Tent, as well as examines the connections between songs, sounds, and silence. Filled with copious quotes from interviews with the singers, I wanted this chapter to go on

forever. Information gleaned from consultants include the statement that Cree hunters did not think of their drums and rattles as musical instruments but as integral parts of their hunting life, facilitating communication with the world of unseen living beings. The context for Cree songs is the people's life in the bush, where successful hunting depends upon effective use of both sounds and silence. Song was also used for spiritual protection against the atosh or witiko, people who became crazed from famine and lost all control over their behaviour. Whidden concludes the chapter with a discussion of how the old songs were essential to daily hunting life, as well as in ceremonies seeking to know the future, be healed, and assure success in hunting.

Another section of the book focuses on the relationship between the Cree and Europeans since first contact, including European fiddle music, sea shanties, the button accordion, square dancing, and an assortment of percussion and brass instruments. Whidden goes on to discuss the missionary influence on the Cree through the introduction of hymns in the nineteenth century, and the impact of radio and television on northern communities in the twentieth century, noting the warm reception of gospel songs and the pervasive popularity of country music in Canada's North. Whidden also looks at the impact of the powwow in the subarctic, which she describes as an appealing social and ritual event that served to unite politically diverse First Nations groups across Canada.

My personal preference would have been to stay longer on the old Cree hunting songs, with more musical transcriptions of the songs discussed in the text. However, I readily acknowledge the importance of examining the contemporary world of the northern Cree, and who better to guide us on this journey than Lynn Whidden, who has herself lived in Canada's North for much of her life. *Essential Song: Three Decades of Northern Cree Music*, with its accompanying compact disc, is a welcome and much-needed addition to the literature on the musical expressions of Canada's First Nations.