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## Book Reviews / Comptes rendus

**Ingeborg Marshall**, *A History and Ethnography of the Beothuk*, Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996, xxiv + 640 pages, \$45.00 (cloth).

Reviewer: *Susan Walter*  
*Saint Mary's University*

A distillation of years of research, Marshall's book contains material on the Beothuk culled from published and unpublished documents and archaeological investigations.

Part 1, "History," is organized chronologically beginning with Beothuk first contacts with Europeans in the 16th century and ending in the late 1820s with their demise "as a viable cultural unit" (p. 14). Beothuk interaction with Europeans and other Native groups is the theme. Marshall argues that "starvation, harassment by Europeans and by other native groups, and diseases brought from Europe contributed to a steady population decline" (p. 4), and the Beothuk's foraging adaptation was undermined as access to coastal and inland resources was eroded (e.g., pp. 62, 65, 69, 79, 91, 137). Unlike other Native groups, they had minimal involvement in the fur trade and did not acquire firearms (p. 287). Nonetheless they obtained metal from the seasonally abandoned European fishing stations. Beothuk retaliation "usually took the form of taking equipment from, rather than attacking, fishermen" (p. 38), and furriers (p. 76). Metal implements appear to have assisted Beothuk in intensifying exploitation of resources still available to them (e.g., pp. 111-112, 330).

Part 2, "Ethnography," addresses numerous topics including the position of the Beothuk in Newfoundland prehistory, the distribution and size of population, aspects of social organization, subsistence patterns, transportation, world view, etc. The sparseness of some sections reflects severe data limitations, a problem Marshall acknowledges (e.g., pp. 249-250, 285). Information regarding Beothuk culture pertains mainly to the second half of the 18th century and to bands that organized caribou drives in the Exploits River vicinity.

Marshall's account is readable, interesting, and its usefulness as a reference work is enhanced by the headings, cross-referencing, maps, tables, figures, and juxtaposition of diverse descriptions of the same event (e.g., p. 143). Marshall situates her sources in cultural context (e.g., pp. 106-107), and includes short biographies of 12 major sources of

documentary information (Appendix 2, pp. 238-246). She considers bias in her sources; however, even more caution might have been exercised. Marshall suggests that the Beothuk "would have had the island more or less to themselves" (p. 14) when Europeans arrived on the scene, but states also that "Micmac . . . may have visited the south coast to trap or fish, and Montagnais may intermittently have hunted on the Northern Peninsula" (p. 14). Since there is evidence that other Native groups were exploiting Newfoundland resources (e.g., pp. 42-45, 56, 60), it may be misleading to state that "the Beothuk are believed to have been the only permanent residents on the island" (p. 14). Nor can it be assumed that Beothuk exploited *only* resources on Newfoundland and offshore islands. More critical use of ethnographic analogy would be welcome. For instance, Marshall states: "while there is no detailed information on Beothuk leadership, it is reasonable to assume that Beothuk bands were headed by individuals whose qualities and roles were similar to those described for other hunter-fisher-gatherer *band* societies" (p. 289, emphasis added). Yet she provides evidence of differential rank at least for the later contact period (e.g., differential attire, bearing, burial, housing, etc., pp. 289-291, 349, 356, 342, 410). Additionally, Beothuk had more emphasis on food storage than did other foragers in the region (e.g., pp. 62, 67, 138, 195-196, 296, 307-308, 359-360, 363).

These qualifications aside, the book is a major contribution to our knowledge of the Beothuk, raising questions which future archaeological investigation and/or other sources may address.

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**John C. Kennedy**, *People of the Bays and Headlands: Anthropological History and the Fate of Communities in the Unknown Labrador*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995, xii + 296 pages, maps, and index.

Reviewer: *David S. Moyer*  
*University of Victoria*

Unknown Labrador refers to the southeast coast of Labrador. This book fulfils the author's "promise to the people of southeastern Labrador to write a book about their history and way