

**Celia Haig-Brown and David A. Nock, eds.,** *With Good Intentions: Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal Relations in Colonial Canada*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006, 358 pages.

Reviewer: *Siomonn P. Pulla*  
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This volume is a refreshing and welcome shift away from dominant postcolonial frameworks that have become popular in understanding complex historical and contemporary Aboriginal-settler relationships in Canada. While scholars over the last decade have focussed much of their attention on unveiling a discourse of victimization, these analyses tend to simplify the contributions of Aboriginal peoples in the representations of their cultural histories and practices, and provide very little context for the complex and overlapping power relations associated with these representations, which were neither totalizing nor ubiquitous. While more recent works such as J.R. Miller's (1996) *Shingwauk's Vision* and Cole Harris' (2003) *Making Native Space* have provided very important contributions to understanding the complex relationships between colonialism and the historic relationships between Aboriginal peoples and Euro-Canadians, *With Good Intentions* provides a valuable contribution to further understanding these relationships; especially those often overlooked "partnerships" forged among Aboriginal peoples, Euro-Canadian settlers, government officials, scholars and scientists.

The editors' claim that this volume is "a repository of bad memories, and good intentions, of unworkable ideas and uncomfortable truths" (p. 2) is disappointing, however, as it sets the text up in the classic "us versus them—good versus bad" binary. While I suspect that the editors did not intend to set the text up in this fashion, it appears that they were not completely comfortable with providing a strong statement in support of their notion that, over the last 150 years in Canada, non-Aboriginal peoples have harboured many good intentions, as well as positive, practical and productive relationships with many Aboriginal peoples and their communities. Unfortunately, this volume has a difficult time freeing itself from the misleading and often misused notion of "colonialism" that appears to permeate all discussions of Aboriginal-non-Aboriginal relations in Canada.

Elsewhere in their introduction, however, Haig-Brown and Nock shift the direction of their discussion away from the postcolonial and more towards the fascinating stories of "good intentions." They point out, for example, that, historically, the "good intentions" of non-Aboriginal peoples were largely ignored or dismissed by those who pursued more aggressive agendas of land and resource appropriation and labour exploitation. Ironically, these are the same stories that have also been largely ignored or dismissed by those contemporary scholars who have and continue to push a more aggressive postcolonial agenda. It is in these stories, and the editors' resolve to present them, that this volume finds its strength

and succeeds in acknowledging the complexities of colonialism, helping to generate a richer, more balanced, retrospective understanding of Canadian history. The editors foreground the stories in this volume within the intellectual and historical context of Victorian notions of biological racism and social Darwinism. While this context provides readers with a better grounding in some of the overarching issues of racism related to the history of the Aboriginal-settler relations in Canada, it also provides a limited frame of reference in relation to the complex history and context of land and resource appropriation and labour exploitation. Haig-Brown and Nock could have related their discussions of racism to the sociopolitical and practical impacts of resource development, nation building, and the general west and northward assertion of sovereignty and effective control by the Crown during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. That being said, the chapters in this volume explore these various issues within their own frameworks, contributing a wider context and understanding of how the Victorian values of biological racism and social Darwinism were imbricated within the wider scope of Canada's colonial history.

The volume is organized in a loose chronological fashion. This chronology, however, is not entirely apparent from a first reading. Yet, it is not necessarily the chronological timeline that ties the articles in this volume together, but the common and varied thread of "good intentions" woven throughout the chapters. In some instances, these good intentions revolve around the actions and exploits of a specific person, such as Nock's examination of the contributions of anthropologist Horatio Hale and Abler's discussion of the work of protestant missionary Silas T. Rand. Other chapters focus more on examining the irony of good intentions gone amiss, such as Hare and Barman's reading of Emma Crosby's missionary work amongst the Tshimshian on British Columbia's northwest Coast, and Smith's harrowing tale of the life and tribulations of 19th-century Métis activist Honoré Joseph Jackson.

Other chapters examine contributions by Euro-Canadians to the Aboriginal struggle to obtain justice and recognition of title rights and rights to pursue traditional activities within their territories. For example, Haig-Brown explores how the Quakers provided added support to the struggles of Anishnaabe-Kwe Nahnebahwequa (Catherine Sutton) in her fight with the government of Upper Canada to have her people's rights to land recognized and protected from the increased pressures of 19th-century colonial settlement. Haig-Brown's reading of Nahnebahwequa is an excellent illustration of the complexities of early Canadian-Aboriginal history and, more specifically, the tensions associated with the assumption of European traditions and the simultaneous assertion of an Aboriginal worldview.

In juxtaposition to the story of Nahnebahwequa, Chute and Knight examine the contributions of non-Aboriginal people to the ongoing struggles of Aboriginal people for recognition of their resource rights. In two separate chapters, Chute and Knight work to dissolve the notion that non-Aboriginal

peoples, even as “agents of the state,” only worked towards the oppression of Aboriginal peoples and their communities. In chapter 5, for example, they explore how Simon Dawson, a Dominion Lands Surveyor and federal treaty representative eventually elected to the Ontario legislature and then to the Canadian parliament, worked closely with Aboriginal peoples, advocating an admiration of Aboriginal culture and protection of their land. Chute and Knight explore how Dawson worked selflessly for the recognition of Aboriginal and title rights, even petitioning that Aboriginal peoples be given the right to vote without losing their status under the *Indian Act*, an amazing effort considering Aboriginal peoples were not granted the right to vote in Canada until 1960.

Wendy Wickwire’s excellent chapter on early 20th-century anthropologist James A. Teit is a welcome break from the intense anthro-bashing and disciplinary deconstruction many anthropologists have faced since the mid-1970s. Wickwire’s examination of Teit’s anthropological practices helps to contribute an alternative view of the foundations of anthropology’s intellectual heritage in Canada. Readers discover that, contrary to the image of the oppressive anthropologist as “agent of state,” Teit worked closely with Aboriginal people in British Columbia to address current issues related to land title, reserves, hunting and fishing rights, and government policies relating to dancing, doctoring and potlatching. Teit’s “activist anthropology” was aimed at mobilizing a political and united Aboriginal leadership in an effort to combat the increasingly aggressive assimilationist agenda of the Department of Indian Affairs during the early 20th century. Wickwire’s claim, however, that this form of activist anthropology during the early 20th century died with Teit in 1922 is questionable. My own work on the life and work of Frank Speck, one of Teit’s colleagues, suggests that Teit was one of many anthropologists during the early 20th century who were engaged politically and worked collaboratively with Aboriginal peoples.

*With Good Intentions* is an excellent addition to the ever-growing scholarly and popular literature relating to the complex social and political history of Aboriginal-settler relations in Canada. While this volume has its shortcomings, it is successful in highlighting the often-overlooked complexities of Canadian history. While we tend to continue to re-scribe a history that was unjust, unique and fraught with difficulties, *With Good Intentions* recognizes those stories of friendships, collaborations and alliances, of good intentions gone awry and the attempts at building bridges across the cultural divide. Does this volume contribute, as the editors suggest, to a process of decolonization? I prefer to think of it as a positive and productive contribution to an ongoing dialogue of trying to understand who we are in relation to one another, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians, how we have come to the current state of affairs and where we intend to go from here.

**Louis Bird**, *Telling Our Stories: Omushkego Legends and Histories from Hudson Bay*, Edited by Jennifer S.H. Brown, Paul W. DePasquale and Mark F. Ruml, Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2005, 269 pages.

Reviewer: *Toby Morantz*  
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This is a remarkable book of oral tradition that brings to the non-Native reader a fuller understanding of Omushkego Cree cosmology, social history and just good stories. The narrator is Louis Bird, a member of Winisk First Nation from Peawanuck near the western shore of Hudson Bay. As we are told, and as is very evident, Louis Bird, today a professional storyteller, has been a student of Omushkego culture for most of his life. He was blessed with a grandmother, a maternal great uncle and his parents who, before him, also believed these stories were worth preserving and related them to him, as did other elders. He began recording these stories in 1975 and it is this collection upon which the book is based. As well, these stories and others are available in Cree and English on a website <http://www.ourvoices.ca> funded by Canadian Heritage which sponsored the digitization of his recordings. There are nine chapters to this book, each one addressing a distinct theme with a collection of stories accompanied by a preface written by each of the editors and three others (Anne Lindsay, Roland Bohr and Donna G. Sutherland). Here an academic touch is added by situating the stories or attempting to do so—not always possible and so speculation comes into play—as well as drawing in comparative material. However, Louis Bird, himself, can use footnotes with the best of them, not to mention dividing his stories into phases similar to those used by archaeologists: before contact, contact and modern (p. 225).

The strength of the book and its distinctiveness is that Louis Bird does not reproduce the stories as he must have heard them, using Cree narrative conventions that are difficult for non-Cree speakers to follow. Instead he has rendered them in a form and style familiar to the English Canadian reader. Even when he is presenting a myth or a legend, the reader is not left to ponder its significance or meaning but is given a full explanation. One example is that while telling the story of *The Giant Skunk*, he comments on how it demonstrates that his ancestors of long ago knew there were animals on earth before humans and animals as large as dinosaurs.

Within each of these stories the reader acquires a wealth of information about the Omushkego people that, again, is imparted through his commentary rather than the story line itself, for example, his stories centred on *mi-te-wi-win* or shamanism. As interesting and telling those stories are, so too is Louis Bird’s discussion of how a child is chosen to become a shaman. Similarly, we learn in his account of the dream quest that women do not have one because they are already “gifted” (p. 97). Other themes in his stories cover first encounters, including shamanism versus Christianity, devastating diseases,