

R.C.B. Risk's "‘This Nuisance of Litigation’: The Origins of Workers’ Compensation in Ontario" shows his usual meticulous work. This time he has gone beyond the appellate case law and combed the archives for trial materials and statistics. The development of legal reparation for injured and killed workers and their families shows the integrity and tenacity of William Meredith, one of the few Canadian judges of his period who could truly be called very competent.

Margaret Banks has written "The Evolution of the Ontario Courts, 1788-1981," an enormous task and an essential one. She provides charts and, in a way, the whole essay is a chart in prose. Banks has provided an excellent skeleton. Now we need someone to flesh out the courts’ history with the human side — the judges’ personalities and rivalries, the perspectives of the litigants, and the experiences of the lawyers. Banks’ essay shows the type of painstaking and pioneering work that would probably be impossible without the Osgoode Society. Long may it thrive.

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Haida Monumental Art: Villages of the Queen Charlotte Islands. GEORGE F. MACDONALD. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983. ix, 240 p. ISBN 0-7748-0155-7. \$140.00.

Less about Haida art than about the monumental objects on which it was displayed, this substantial volume provides a village-by-village analysis of the more than 500 totem poles and 250 houses that stood in Haida settlements on the Queen Charlotte Islands during the closing decades of the nineteenth century. The cedar plank houses have long since vanished. About 10 per cent of the poles found their way into museum collections and a far smaller percentage (primarily at the southern village of Ninstints) stand today *in situ* like weary ghosts from a now legendary past.

Drawing upon the rich historical photographic record of Haida villages, village site surveys conducted by the National Museums of Canada between 1966 and 1981, and the published and unpublished data of several early ethnographers, George MacDonald has produced a compendium of Haida architecture, totem poles, and village plans — no small feat given the fragmentary and conflicting data upon which he had to draw.

The twenty chapters on the major villages are bracketed by Haida artist Bill Reid’s eloquent preface, MacDonald’s overview of Haida culture, history, and cosmology, and photo-archivist Richard Huyda’s concluding commentary on photography and the Haida villages. The latter essay is a fitting sequel to MacDonald’s village study even though it retraces the groundwork laid by others in earlier publications.

Taking a structuralist approach, MacDonald presents an original analysis of Haida cosmology. Haida architecture, art, and rituals are viewed as cosmic metaphors. During a totem-pole raising, for example, the pole’s dangling support ropes mimicked the *axis mundi* pole whose strings extended to all the Haida villages. While it can be argued that Haida cosmology is more central to the understanding of Haida art and architecture than other features of Haida culture, MacDonald’s

cultural overview may be too uneven for readers unfamiliar with Haida culture. The ritual of potlatching, for example, an important component of the erection of both houses and totem poles, is mentioned but nowhere defined or described.

The village chapters follow a similar format. Each includes a history of the settlement, an account of first contact with the native population, population estimates of the settlement made by the Hudson's Bay Company in the 1830s, distinctive features of the settlement and its outstanding personnel, and the time and circumstances of its abandonment. For several but not all villages, MacDonald gives a date for the large plan map he presents of village houses and totem poles. Entries for individual houses within a village list the house name, chief, dimensions and significant known architectural features, and historical information on the house and its occupants. Each totem pole affiliated with a house site is described, figure by figure. Historical photographs illustrating the village houses and poles are appropriately interspersed with the text.

In his documentation of houses, MacDonald has drawn upon John R. Swanton's list of Haida houses published in *Contributions to the Ethnology of the Haida* (1909), Swanton's unpublished field notes, and the notes of ethnographic collectors C.F. Newcombe and James Deans. Identification of totem-pole figures was aided by Marius Barbeau's two-volume publication on totem poles (1950) and Deans' earlier "Tales from the Totems of the Haidery" (1893). Although there is a fair amount of historical information on Haida houses and poles in these sources, the task of documentation was anything but routine. Houses listed by Swanton's Haida informants were not always contemporaneous and his baseline date for his house lists is at least thirty to forty years prior to the timeframe within which MacDonald has located his village plans.

MacDonald's otherwise careful documentation is marred by some omissions, errors, and sloppy editing. Though the subtitle suggests the book's contents, there is no explicit statement of what the book intends to accomplish. Similarly, given the author's herculean attempt to make sense of earlier ethnographers' field notes, document the minutiae of visual information in historical photographs, and coordinate all with the results of on-the-ground survey, the absence of discussion of methodology is both surprising and perturbing. The accuracy of village plan maps, for example, must vary considerably since some village sites contained virtually no surviving nineteenth-century features at the time of the survey; yet all maps are presented as if each house and pole were precisely located.

Historical errors detract from the volume. MacDonald notes (p. 17) that a smallpox epidemic in the 1830s ravaged the Northwest Coast affecting "virtually every Haida village" and diminishing the Haida population by half. This smallpox epidemic actually occurred in 1862-63; the epidemic MacDonald mentions was contained on the mainland and did not noticeably affect the Queen Charlotte Haida. Further confusing the impact of smallpox on the Haida, MacDonald refers (p. 164, caption to Plate 223) to "the smallpox epidemic of the 1880s" which resulted in the abandonment of the village of Yan. Again, he means the 1860s epidemic. Other errors of fact are also evident. MacDonald notes (p. 39) that Swanton studied the Haida in 1899. Swanton actually studied the Haida in 1900-01 as MacDonald correctly notes elsewhere (p. 32). At one point (p. 134), he remarks that the Hudson's Bay Company had a trading post at Masset as early as 1855; but two pages later he

states that the first Hudson's Bay Company post opened in Masset in 1869. A good editor would have caught these and other similar discrepancies before the book went to press.

Errors of terminology create minor problems. In the introductory pages, MacDonald is careful to use the term "lineage" for the named Haida matrilineal units, but later he reverts to Swanton's "families," a vague and incorrect label for social groupings generally regarded as matrilineages. The author also incorrectly translates the Haida term for mortuary pole (*xat*) as "grandfather;" the correct translation is "father" (female speaking) which bespeaks the importance of father's lineage in Haida rituals of death.

It is this reviewer's impression that both author and publisher were ambivalent about the type of book *Haida Monumental Art* should be. It can be considered a "coffee table" book given its oversize dimensions, limited edition status, sketches by Bill Reid, and colour photographs of Ninstints (which are, by the way, an aesthetic disappointment). Or as the first and only methodical documentation of houses and totem poles in all the major Haida villages, the book is a potentially significant reference work. Unfortunately, however, as a "coffee table" publication, the book loses the "average" reader in the tedium of house lists and totem-pole inventories. More importantly, for a reference work, it is underwritten and underreferenced. It is unfortunate, too, that the reference utility of the volume may be hampered by its monumental price. As one who has appreciated and benefitted from MacDonald's expertise in Northwest Coast ethnology, I do not believe *Haida Monumental Art* is an accurate measure of the breadth and excitement of his knowledge.

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First People, First Voices. PENNY PETRONE, ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983. x, 221 p. ISBN 0-8020-2515-3 \$19.95.

First People, First Voices is the only collection of formal speeches, informal commentary, and fiction by Canadian Indians extending from the early European records of the 1630s to the present. Penny Petrone, a professor at Lakehead University's Faculty of Education and participant in its Native Teacher Education Programme, states that her purpose is "to show the beginnings and development in Canada of Indian literary tradition in English" and, incidentally, to document "the Indian view of Canadian history." She suggests that modern Indian writers are, or might in future be, influenced by the written as well as the traditional oral works of their ancestors. Petrone thus evidently hopes that her book will provide reference material and even models for aspiring Indian authors. Inuit and Métis works are by implication excluded, although there is at least one of the latter, an undistinguished text by the nun Sara Riel.

First People, First Voices is a generally well-crafted work that will both interest the general reader and provide useful reference for scholars in Canadian Indian history and literature. The University of Toronto Press has, as usual, produced a handsome book abundantly illustrated with portraits of the authors. One can object