

Beginnings: From the First Nations to the Great Migration. Marshall Jamieson. Reidmore Books, 1996. 134 pp. \$26.20 cloth. ISBN 1-895073-57-X.

Being a First Nations member, actually an Iiyiyuu (Cree) from Eastern James Bay in Northern Quebec, I found the title of this history text exciting. When I eventually received the copy, the cover, illustrations, photographs, actual legends and stories of place names were indeed very appealing to me. Young adolescents will find the visual presentations interesting. However, upon reviewing the text on First Nations, I became somewhat dismayed at the absence of explanations for the way in which First Nations peoples and newcomers first interacted.

Coming from a nomadic, traditional lifestyle, I feel that I have experienced ways First Nations might have felt and might have treated these newcomers, hundreds of years ago. Up until the late fifties, families from our community were still living history, as presented in this book; yearly people were providing furs to the Hudson's Bay Company, in the process of being converted to Christianity and becoming "acculturated," "assimilated" into mainstream Canadian society through the policies of Indian Affairs. I personally am one of the products. Although there might have been differences between groups or bands of First Nations, these peoples not only talked about such human values as respect, sharing, helping, kinship etc., they lived these teachings. Because First Nations embodied these principles, they readily accepted and tolerated the ways of the newcomers.

I truly appreciate the layout of this book, the beautiful illustrations, pictures, the stories and myths. The text, however, does not leave open the possibility of examining history in a way that would shed light onto present-day issues — such as English/French relations, a topic of great relevance for the Quebec Cree — that are sometimes personal, cultural, and national in nature and that face us as diversified groups of this country. It is important to examine these issues in an historical context. Are we only providing facts and dates again to our students? The time has come to allow young juvenile learners to examine history critically because therein they may find some explanations for our modern-day social dilemmas.

Television, film, video and radio have attempted to present a much more truthful view of unfolding global events and have offered excellent historical documentaries — such as Alanis Obomsawin's *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* (National Film Board) which won the Best Canadian Feature Film award at the 1993 Toronto Festival of Festivals — which analyze in depth incidents at the time of contact. So, where have our writers of history been? Where are they coming from in creating texts of history for young learners? Are they not putting much research effort into painting a more honest account of Canadian history?

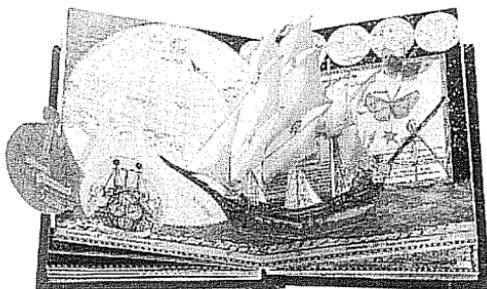
Although I did not have a chance to review the teachers' resource or guide book, I certainly hope it encourages opportunities for students to think about such questions as Why did these explorers go out to conquer lands? Why were

so many First Nations killed? Why were native peoples told their spiritual ways were “heathen”? Why are First Nations losing their languages? In Canada, out of fifty or more First Nations languages only three have a chance of survival. I pose these questions, not to blame, but to help young learners know, or at least think about, the possible reasons behind the historical subjugations of the first peoples of this land.

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POP-UP EXPLORATION

Seven Great Explorations. Celia King. Illus. author. Raincoast Books, 1996. Unpag. \$12.95 cloth/pop-up. ISBN 1-55192-028-X.



Seven Great Explorations is one of eight pop-up books by Celia King in the “Seven ...” format. The book is a miniature, only 4 1/2" by 5 3/4", and covers seven explorations ranging from the voyage of Pytheas, c. 310 BC to the Apollo 11 moon landing in 1969. Each exploration is given two pages of text and an illustration. The text is factual and interesting, if brief, and outlines the significance of each journey the author has chosen to profile. In any “top ten” list of this sort, the choices are somewhat idiosyncratic, but King hits the highlights and no one obvious was left out. There are no women but that simply reflects historical reality. One can only hope girls are inspired rather than discouraged by this.

King is an artist who teaches at the Emily Carr School of Art and Design in Vancouver; hence, the real purpose of the book is, of course, the illustrations, which are marvellous. The pop-ups are intricately rendered against beautiful, evocative backdrops. The book is really more *objet d'art* than anything else.