stand adult attitudes and prejudices in matters of political or religious differences. As one Jewish writer recalled, she led a double life, as a satisfactory Australian girl at school and as a satisfactory daughter of a European Jewish communist at home (p. 274).

Dow and Factor's professional expertise and personal interest qualify both women as able and appropriate editors. Through their judicious selection of materials they have accomplished their stated purpose for this anthology—to enable readers to view with pleasure and enlightenment 160 years of Australian childhood as experienced by those who lived it. *Australian Childhood* is a well-organized, thoughtfully selected collection that can be picked up and read with understanding and pleasure at any point in the book. It is a valuable addition to the history of childhood in Australia and ought to be of interest not only to historians of childhood, but also to those readers, both young and old, who are interested in the lives of their ancestors and the history of their nation. In conclusion, *Australian Childhood* is truly a serendipity for readers because it will appeal to the child in most of us.

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Ken S. Coates. *Best Left as Indians: Native-White Relations in the Yukon Territory, 1840-1973*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991. Pp. 356. $39.95.

In less than a decade Ken Coates has established himself not only as an authority on the north, but as one of Canada's most productive young historians. *Best Left as Indians* is a revised version of his 1984 doctoral dissertation and is his most scholarly work to date.

The book focuses on the dynamics of Native-white relations in Yukon history between 1840 and 1990. In exploring this complex subject, a number of general themes emerge: in a history punctuated by dramatic episodes, the Native population was the constant element; policies and attitudes over the years ensured segregated existences for the two communities; and Natives retained throughout a distinct preference for their traditional way of life.

The story begins with the arrival of fur traders in the Yukon River basin in the 1840s. In the analysis that follows, Coates shows that the Indians were astute protectors of their own interests in trading with the fur companies. They were adept at manipulation and even used military threats on occasion to get what they wanted.

During the mining frontier, Indians played a more peripheral role. Some took on seasonal work as labourers and packers for the prospectors but most continued with their hunting and food-gathering activities. The frenzy of the Gold Rush pushed Natives aside, Coates argues, reducing them to a small minority. A few, none-

theless, were able to profit from the excitement as packers or provisioners.

The construction of the Alaska Highway in the 1940s brought further disruptions and opportunities. There was some Native participation—they served as a temporary casual labour pool while continuing to engage in their own harvesting economy. Whether in mining or in road construction, whites ensured that Natives were kept on the margins, excluded from the most profitable roles.

Coates grapples honestly and fairly with the contentious role of sex and alcohol in the relations between Natives and whites and shows that when these factors were missing, there was little social interaction between the races. The physical isolation of Indians in their hunting terrains and reserves, rules discouraging their presence in towns, segregated schools, hospitals, and so forth ensured the maintenance of two solitudes. There is also an excellent discussion of the impact of drink and disease on Native society and their role in the formation of negative racial stereotypes.

The section on missionary work and education does not disappoint. Coates deals perceptively with the complexities of religious conversion and concludes that most natives adopted Christianity superficially, blending its rituals with their traditional beliefs. Education too, is a tale of general ineffectiveness, especially in day schools. The Carcross Residential School achieved mixed results as well, and its problems mirrored those of similar institutions in the south: parental suspicion, death, and rigid discipline. It aimed to produce "improved Indians" rather than assimilated ones; instead, it created a body of young men and women trapped in a cultural limbo.

Meanwhile, the federal Department of Indian Affairs was content with a policy of protection rather than assimilation. It protected Native hunting rights in the belief that such traditional pursuits offered the best means of economic self-sufficiency. In a realistic adaptation to local circumstances, Indians were "best left as Indians." Coates points out that this was an exception to the general contours of federal policy with its stated aim of assimilation. Others who have written about Indian policy in the past, of course, have shown that it was far from consistent or uniform in design or application. Coates tends to give himself a bit too much credit for having "discovered" this inconsistency.

Everything changed following the Second World War. The rush to develop the north brought decades of social crisis for the Yukon's Indians. And yet, in spite of escalating crime, alcoholism, poverty, violence, and language loss, they retained a determination to resist assimilation. The turning point came in 1973 when they submitted a comprehensive claim to Ottawa concerning territorial lands that they had never surrendered. Coates provides a balanced and detailed analysis of the Native resurgence of the 1970s and 1980s. The land question is the major focus and it culminates in the signing of an agreement in principle in April 1990 on this very question.

While I found the resolution of the land claim issue a most appropriate

concluding point for the book, I could not help noticing the rather misleading subtitle which suggests that it only covers the period 1840-1973 (the period covered by the dissertation, but not the book!). And this brings me to some other minor quibbles with this otherwise excellent work.

Coates chose a thematic rather than a strictly chronological structure for his book. While this works for the most part, it does result in occasional repetition which is sometimes tedious and a bit confusing. In one chapter, for instance, we meet Anglican theology students working as summer missionaries in the Yukon; in another we meet them as summer school teachers. Are these the same fellows or not?

Chapter 4, which deals with Native-white relations before the Gold Rush, is somewhat vague and speculative and lacks the persuasive evidence provided by Sylvia Van Kirk and Jennifer Brown in their studies of the same phenomenon. The Native women who took up with fur traders remain anonymous throughout. This may be due to Coates' proclaimed aversion to "dominant personalities." In his anxiety (presumably) to keep them off his pages, he tends to write about amorphous, shadowy figures who act out history as vague collectivities. This is particularly destructive when writing about Indians who in the past have had their names changed, translated, placed in quotation marks, and even replaced by numbers (in residential schools, for example). In Chapter 5, social relations after the Gold Rush, the Native women are more real, but the focus is still mainly on the "squaw-men," whites who took Indians as their wives.

In the final section of the book, which covers the 1950-90 period, a brief discussion of structural changes in the Department of Indian Affairs as well as shifts in Indian policy would give a better national context to territorial developments. The uninitiated may be perplexed at encountering officials who are variously referred to as Indian agents and Indian superintendents without explanation, to give but one example.

A book of such a specialized nature badly needs a map. The place names which pepper its pages assume an intimate familiarity with Yukon geography on the part of the reader. This is unreasonable.

As usual, McGill-Queen's has been meticulous in the editing of the manuscript. Only a couple of glitches offend the eye. "Mulhull" (p. 281) should be "Mulhall." "Alternate" (p. 142) should be "alternative."

All things considered, this is a first-rate piece of scholarship that demonstrates mastery of an impressive array of primary and secondary sources. It engages an aspect of our past that is both interesting and significant and does so with style and clarity. Outstanding regional studies of Native-white relations by Sarah Carter, Robin Fisher, Cornelius Jaenen, and Leslie Upton have a worthy companion in this volume. It surely deserves a larger readership than its retail price ($39.95) will allow.

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