

gendered distribution of property, certainly nothing about inheritance patterns, although, as an ideological practice, census-taking attached property to adult men. But the book is an important contribution to ongoing debates and will likely encourage further investigation into inheritance practices and into the distribution of property values.

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Katherine Pettipas. *Severing the Ties that Bind: Government Repression of Indigenous Religious Ceremonies on the Prairies* (Manitoba Studies in Native History, No. 7). Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1994. Pp. xiv, 304. Can\$18.95 paper, Can\$39.95 cloth.

Until the middle of the present century the Canadian Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) was committed to undermining indigenous forms of economic, political and cultural organization through systematic ceremonial repression. This is the first study to analyze in detail both the administrative aspects of this formidable dossier of repression, and the Aboriginal responses to these efforts. Beginning with an 1885 amendment to the Indian Act to ban the potlatch, a central institution of people of the northwest coast, the DIA implemented a series of amendments designed to eliminate religious expression and custom such as the Sun Dance and giveaway ceremonies of the prairies, and the Midewiwin of the woodland peoples. This study focusses on the experiences of the Plains Cree, who lived in the midst of the agricultural settlement belt and felt the full brunt of the combined efforts of government and church officials, as well as of the police.

The book begins with the story of Chief Piapot, a distinguished hunter, trader, warrior, linguist, peace negotiator, spiritual leader, and healer. For fulfilling his sacred vow to perform the Thirst Dance on his reserve in south-central Saskatchewan in the late 1890s, Piapot was arrested, prosecuted, incarcerated, and removed from his official position as chief. Piapot's story introduces and highlights two major themes of the book—the extent to which authorities were prepared to go to undermine indigenous institutions, and the determination of the people to continue to practise religion and traditions in the face of government regulations. Pettipas argues that there were many layers of rationale for these coercive measures, but at their core was the recognition of a direct connection between the ceremonial life and the political, economic, social, and cultural integrity of indigenous societies. These mea-

asures were at the very heart of government efforts culturally to absorb Aboriginal peoples into the general citizenry of the Canadian nation-state.

Katherine Pettipas has a strong interdisciplinary background lacking in the training of many historians; she has a doctorate in history and anthropology and is curator of Native Ethnology at the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature. Her chapter introducing the Plains Cree (chapter 2) reflects this interdisciplinary background and is an extremely effective overview of their history and society. Pettipas clearly demonstrates the pervasiveness of spirituality, and the importance of the relationship of religious ideology to the material and secular world. She describes the Thirst Dance or Sun Dance, the communal ceremony that had as its major purposes thanksgiving and regeneration—ensuring the very survival of the Plains Cree. But there was a great variety of other communal ceremonies involving giveaways of material goods, which ensured that resources necessary for survival were available to all. Pettipas describes an intricate and many-faceted system of education embedded and reflected in these ceremonies and rituals, which were the central mechanisms for transmitting cultural knowledge from one generation to another.

The insights Pettipas provides into these ceremonies as part of the fabric of life allow readers to understand Aboriginal reaction to government regulations. Whereas other historians have minimized the impact of this legislation, Pettipas argues that despite efforts to evade and resist prohibitions, “there was a significant effect, especially when other forms of assimilative measures are taken into consideration” (p. 5). People took the legislation seriously. This study is particularly strong because of its recognition of complexity and diversity; Pettipas does not attempt an either/or answer to the question of whether this legislation was a “dead letter.” She illustrates that many mechanisms and tactics aside from arrest, conviction, and incarceration were used to discourage ceremonial practice, including the pass system, police patrols, restricted access to material goods for ceremonies, the destruction of sacred offerings and lodges, and the enforced dispersal of groups. These tactics changed over time, with more repressive measures adopted after 1914, when efforts to disperse people and arrest leaders intensified. Resistance and reaction to these regulations took many forms, including different kinds of petitions, official visits to DIA offices, court challenges, and the modification of ceremonial time, space, and content. Officials were told that the government was abrogating treaty rights, and denying people basic rights of religious freedom.

A major form of resistance was persistence but Pettipas does not conclude from this that government efforts had little or no impact. The increasing evidence in the twentieth century of the disintegration of indigenous forms of social and political organization on reserve communities suggests that Victorian officials’ were correct to see intricate connections between these forms,

on one hand, and religious life on the other. Pettipas does a careful and impressive job of pointing out both the strength of resistance and the powerless and marginal position occupied by Aboriginal people as a result of the entire spectrum of coercive policies they contended with. She does not isolate her topic but effectively places it within the broader context of the history of Indian administration in Canada, including that of Indian education, which officials saw as a central weapon in their battle against the future strength of indigenous religious ceremonies. Pettipas also includes a chapter in which she draws attention to similarities in the colonial experiences of New Zealand and Australia.

Any criticisms I have of this book are minor. It might have been strengthened with an historiographical overview, displaying greater awareness of recent debates about the "agency" of colonized people, in which the author directly challenges other points of view, but Pettipas makes her points implicitly throughout the book. It is based mainly on the traditional documentary sources for these topics—government and church records, and other manuscript, archival sources. She effectively draws upon published Aboriginal authors Edward Ahenakew, Abel Watetch, and others but there are no oral interviews. This topic, which extends well into the present century, might have lent itself to this method of gathering information.

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Raymond Huel, ed. *Western Oblate Studies 3/Etudes Oblates de l'Ouest 3*. Edmonton: Western Canadian Publishers, 1994. Pp. 158. Can\$20.00.

Religious history has never been in the mainstream of historical studies in Canada; nevertheless, confined to the periphery, it continues to survive and even prosper. As Douglas Owrain pointed out in his *Canadian History: A Reader's Guide*, the last few years have seen a revival in religious history. Likewise, John Schultz asserts in his *Writing about Canada* that the issue of secularization is one of the hottest debates in intellectual history. In French Canada, however, religious concerns have always occupied a more central position than in English Canada, especially after Catholicism became inextricably entangled with French-Canadian nationalism from the mid-nineteenth century to the 1960s. Indeed, until after the Second World War, those who wrote history in French Canada were often religious, such as the most prolific and widely read historian of the twentieth century in Quebec, abbé Lionel