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THE OLD WAY NORTH: FOLLOWING THE OBERHOLTZER-MAGEE EXPEDITION. By DAVID F. PELLY. St. Paul, Minnesota: Borealis Books, 2008. ISBN 978-0-87351-616-7. xvi + 197 p., maps, b&w illus., selected bib., index. Hardbound. US\$27.95.

In 1912, a young American graduate of Harvard, Ernest Oberholtzer, along with an Anishinaabe man from the Rainy Lake District of Ontario, named Taytáhpahswáwewong, but called Billy Magee, made an extraordinary 2000-mile canoe journey beginning at The Pas, Manitoba. They went north up Reindeer Lake to Brochet, through the Barrens, paddling the length of Nueltin Lake and down the Thlewiaza River to Hudson Bay, where they turned south and finally reached Gimli, Manitoba, in a race against the approaching winter. The northern part of the route was unmapped and had been previously travelled mainly by the Chipewyan and Inuit people. It was a time of heroic exploration: Peary had recently claimed to have reached the North Pole, Amundsen had conquered the Northwest Passage, and the world had just learned of the death of Robert Scott on his return from the South Pole. Oberholtzer was inspired by the writings of Canadian surveyor and geologist J.B. Tyrrell, who in his work for the Geological Survey travelled the Dubawnt and Thelon rivers in 1893 and the Kazan and Ferguson rivers in 1894. His report of both surveys, published in 1898, contains descriptions of the region the young American hoped to explore.

David Pelly's book, *The Old Way North*, is not a mere recounting of the Oberholtzer expedition, but instead uses it as a framework for a detailed exploration of the area travelled, particularly the part from Reindeer Lake, on the border between Saskatchewan and Manitoba, north to Nueltin Lake, which straddles the border of Manitoba and the North West Territories (today's Nunavut)—the true Barren Lands.

While the fur trade was firmly established in this area by 1912, represented by both the Hudson's Bay Company and Revillon Frères, Oberholtzer's trip was a forerunner of the kind of adventure travel that would come much later. The area was a no-man's-land where the Inuit and Chipewyan, using different strategies, depended for their livelihood on the caribou: "Whereas the Inuit positioned their camps at

likely caribou crossings and waited, the Dene [Chipewyan] were more inclined to simply follow the caribou in their migration, not unlike a pack of wolves" (p. 64). The hostility between them made it difficult for anyone to find a guide to conduct him through the territory.

Pelly does a kind of time-travel through the history of the area, going back to the time of Samuel Hearne in the 18th century and up to the descriptions of Bill Layman, who is still canoeing the area today. The narrative ranges from the mid-19th century, when the Roman Catholic mission was established in the village of Brochet at the head of Reindeer Lake, to the travels of American P.G. Downes, who in 1939 covered some of the same route traveled by Oberholtzer and Magee 27 years earlier. Pelly traces centuries of nomadic movement of the Chipewyan, the Inuit, and the Cree as they followed the caribou across the land, sometimes in co-operation and sometimes in hostility, and then leaps forward to the period between World War I and World War II, when white trappers invaded the area in their quest for the white fur of the arctic fox.

David Pelly's connections to the North are long and deep. His ancestor John Henry Pelly was the governor of the Hudson's Bay Company for 30 years in the early 19th century. In addition to his canoe trips in the North, Pelly has lived in Baker Lake and Cambridge Bay, working closely with the local people, and he obviously relishes his contacts with them. In the preparation of this book, he travelled to Brochet and to Arviat on the Hudson Bay coast: Brochet was the last settlement at which Oberholtzer made his final, unsuccessful attempt to hire a guide for the journey, and Arviat—then known as Eskimo Point—is at the mouth of the Thlewiaza River, where the pair of canoeists miraculously met Inuit who took them south to the Hayes River, thus saving their lives. Pelly had with him some of Oberholtzer's 1912 photographs, and he found current residents of both communities who were able to identify some of their ancestors.

The book is like a medieval tapestry, filled with people and incidents, all connected by different-coloured threads of relationship. Pelly had set out to celebrate the natural and cultural history of one of the least known areas of the North, and he has achieved his aim magnificently. As in a tapestry, the connections are sometimes hard to follow, but with patience and persistence, the whole picture gradually emerges.

There are no reference citations in the book, only a few explanatory footnotes to clarify a point. Occasionally one would like to know the source of the information, particularly on the movement and relationships of the Chipewyan and the Inuit, although one can deduce the answers from the bibliography. There are several oral histories of the people of Brochet, some collected by Pelly himself. The attribution for the others can be found in the Acknowledgement section, which also explains why the Oblate Codex historicus du Lac Caribou, the material for the extensive section on the history of the Catholic Church in Brochet, is not included in the bibliography. One book that might have been included in the bibliography was *No Man's River* (2004), based on

the diaries kept by Farley Mowat during his 1947 travels with Charlie Schweder, who is featured in the chapter on trappers.

Beautifully produced for the Minnesota Historical Society, this multi-layered book is a fine addition to the cultural history of the eastern Barrens. The price was reasonable before the value of the Canadian dollar dropped in comparison to its American counterpart.

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CARIBOU AND THE NORTH: A SHARED FUTURE.

By MONTE HUMMEL and JUSTINA RAY. Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2008. ISBN 978-1-55002-839-3. 288 p., maps, colour illus, appendices, bib., index. Hardbound. Cdn\$50.00.

This is not a classic tabletop book because of its 254 mm × 203 mm format, yet it comes close because of its 42 maps, 120 photos, and general treatment of complex subject matter. Its purpose is to draw attention to the plight of caribou in Canada and Alaska and suggest remedies. Both the authors, as well as Robert Redford and Stephen Kakfwi in their forewords, maintain that caribou and the North are inextricably intertwined and that loss of caribou would be a critical blow to conservation and to northern aboriginal peoples. Caribou are shared by countries, jurisdictions, diverse peoples, hunters, the public, and resource developers. How those shares are allocated will determine the fate of the 200 or so populations of caribou in Canada and Alaska.

Each of the four major sections of the book is introduced by a Robert Bateman sketch. These are entitled "The Importance of Caribou," "Pressures on Caribou: Past, Present and Future," "Key Steps for Conserving Caribou," and "Expert Profiles of Different Kinds of Caribou." In Section 1, the case is made that caribou are not only essential to the well-being and social health of aboriginal peoples, as articulated in many quotations, but also barometers of ecosystem health. Many species of predators and scavengers are dependent on caribou for sustenance. The caribou most at risk are those at the northern and southern extremes of their range in North America. Climate change on the Canadian Arctic Islands and industrial activity in the south are tagged by the authors as primary threats to caribou. At the end of Section 2, the authors outline ten "litmus tests"

readers can use to assess how well caribou are being conserved. These range from protection of the calving grounds of migratory tundra caribou, to harvest limitations, to provisions for caribou habitat in areas of industrial activity and accommodation of critical habitat in land-use planning.

In the third section, the authors suggest that political leaders must become more knowledgeable and proactive about caribou conservation. Governments must fit development into a conservation policy, and not do the reverse (make commitments to industry prior to land-use planning). Funds must be dedicated to caribou conservation; for example, caribou conservation plans are of little consequence if there is not adequate monitoring of populations. Corporations must initiate practices that go beyond minimum compliance with acts, regulations, and guidelines. "No exploration or development should further endanger an endangered population, worsen the decline of a threatened one, increase the decline of a declining one, or destabilize a healthy one fluctuating within natural limits" (p. 180). This is a strong guideline that is achievable only if governments back off from a preoccupation with industrial growth and job creation. Finally, the authors make a plea for specific reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, for "unless we successfully address the larger issue of climate change... all the other governmental policy suggestions we have made regarding caribou won't amount to much in the long term" (p. 189).

In Section 4, the selected three major ecotypes of caribou are discussed, migratory tundra caribou by Anne Gunn, boreal forest caribou by James Schaefer, and mountain caribou by Dale Seip and Bruce McLellan. According to Gunn, most of the recent declines in migratory tundra caribou can be attributed to unfavorable weather, but they are exacerbated by hunting. Industrial activity is increasing rapidly on the ranges of most of the mainland populations and is known to have some effect on caribou distribution. Schaefer paints a different picture of boreal forest caribou: they are in trouble because of human activity, which has resulted in habitat loss and fragmentation, increased predation, increased access to humans, and climatic change. According to Seip and McLean, this picture is duplicated for mountain caribou in the deep snow zone of southern British Columbia and the adjacent United States. Climate change and human activities result in increased predation, and persistence of some caribou populations may not be possible without predator management. Populations of mountain caribou in northern British Columbia, Yukon, and Alaska currently are not at risk, but their status could change with increased development and climate change.

This reader-friendly tome is the best current review of what is happening to caribou across North America. The report contains remarkably few statistics on numbers and trends of individual populations. However, the attractive multicolored maps convey a wealth of current information. One can quibble with a few statements in the book, but in general it presents the subject matter objectively. The material was reviewed by some of the icons in caribou biology,