

facing northern communities. All of the contributors in this volume identify causes for optimism; yet realizing this optimism will require the implementation of more comprehensive and informed public policy that focuses on the future well-being of Northerners and ensures Northerners greater control of their own self-directed development. No longer can the Canadian Government afford to “dabble in the art of Northern public policy” (p. 103). Rather, as Rob Huebert notes in the book, a perfect storm is brewing in the North, and it is now time for the Canadian government to act.

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FURS AND FRONTIERS IN THE FAR NORTH: THE CONTEST AMONG NATIVES AND FOREIGN NATIONS FOR THE BERING STRAIT FUR TRADE. By JOHN R. BOCKSTOCE. Foreword by FELIPE FERNÁNDEZ-ARMESTO. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009. ISBN 978-0-300-14921-0. xxi + 472 p., maps, b&w illus., notes, bib., index. Hardbound. US\$35.00.

The Bering Strait, separating Northeast Asia from Alaska, is one of those crossroads in the world that has shaped the cultural development of human populations in Northeast Asia and North America for thousands of years. In this, his most recent book, John Bockstoce brings the reader into the historical times of the Bering Strait region when first the Russians, followed by the British and Americans, entered the area, quickly becoming embroiled in a competitive struggle with various Native groups for the trade in furs and goods. The social and economic consequences for the Native populations were dramatic, particularly in the 19th century, when American whalers entered the fray.

The book is divided into three parts, each dealing with a particular segment of the history of trading activities in the Bering Strait region during the 18th to 20th centuries. In the opening chapter of part one, the author describes the July 1819 arrival of an American trading brig, *General San Martin*, near the Big Diomedes Island, located mid-way between the easternmost point of Asia and the westernmost point of continental North America. The vessel had sailed from Hawaii with the goal of investigating the potential for fur trading in the Bering Strait region. Close to shore, the American vessel was surrounded by 200 hostile Chukchi and Eskimos in 18 walrus-covered umiaqs. Thus prevented from trading, the American commander, Eliab Grimes, headed for the Chukchi Peninsula, where he faced a similarly hostile reception. The Chukchi and the Eskimos were not about to relinquish their control over the lucrative trade between the two continents. Grimes had better luck trading

on the American side of the Strait and eventually returned to Hawaii with enough profit to rouse enthusiasm for maritime trade in the far North.

With this account, the author introduces the reader to a common theme found throughout the book: the slow and unwelcomed encroachment of European and American traders into territories previously controlled by a variety of Native middle-men groups. The appearance of the *General San Martin* in Russian waters marked the beginning of a growing concern by the Russian-American Company over their near monopoly of trade in the region, and in 1821 Russia prohibited all foreign merchant ships from trading in the Russian colonies in the North Pacific, a prohibition not easily enforced.

In part two, the author presents a more detailed history of the Russian expansion into Alaska, going back to 1741 and Vitus Bering's second voyage of exploration. The first Russian settlement was established on Kodiak Island in 1785, and during the following decade, chief traders like Alexander Baranov gained increasing control over the Alaskan fur trade. In 1799, Tsar Paul granted a trade monopoly to the Russian-America Company covering the Kurile and Aleutian islands and much of the North Pacific territory.

Early 19th-century exploration by Russia was not entirely about furs and trade. The old quest of finding a northern sea route between Europe and Asia was the primary aim of Otto von Kotzebue's voyage in the *Riurik* in 1816. The British, equally eager to find a northwest passage, outfitted several expeditions for that purpose, beginning with John Ross's voyage in 1818. One of the players in these Arctic exploits, John Franklin, proposed a three-pronged approach, which included his leading an overland expedition to the mouth of the Mackenzie River. From there he was to travel westward to Kotzebue Sound and meet up with members of another British expedition under the command of Frederick Beechey. Captain Belcher, under Beechey's command, came within a few hundred miles of meeting up with Franklin. The appearance of British expedition members on the north coast of Alaska was met with great hostility from the Mackenzie and the Point Barrow Eskimos, who didn't want any interference with their control of trade along the coast and the interior.

Six of the chapters in part two deal with the Russian and British trade rivalry in northern Alaska. The Russians were eager to intercept the flow of trade goods and furs crossing the Bering Strait—furs from Alaska heading west to Asia and trade goods from Asia heading east to Alaska. In 1832, the Russian-American Company, as a means of creating a permanent presence in the region, established the Michailovsky redoubt (fort and trading post) near the Yukon Delta. The fort also served as a base for increasing explorations of the Alaskan interior, including Lavrenty Zagoskin's explorations of the Yukon River. Contact between Russians and Natives brought about smallpox epidemics and other diseases. The introduction of an equal or greater scourge, alcohol, was initially prevented by the Russian-American Company's prohibition against trade of alcohol and

firearms. Unfortunately, foreign traders and whalers were far less concerned about introducing these items and did so with great abandon.

While the Russians were hard at work expanding their area of influence and trade in western Alaska, the Hudson's Bay and the North West companies wanted to expand their trading activities into the Northwest. In 1789, Alexander Mackenzie had traced the flow of the Mackenzie River to its confluence with the Arctic Ocean. He observed that in spite of active trade links between Native groups, considerable hostility was evident between the Mackenzie and the Alaskan Eskimos, as well as with the Gwich'in Indians. The merger of the Canadian companies in 1821 set the stage for a western expansion of trade activities culminating with the establishment, in 1847, of the Hudson's Bay post, Fort Yukon, well within Russian American territory.

Part three deals with the accelerated social and economic changes imposed upon the Native peoples of the Bering Strait region by dramatic increases in whaling activities. During the summer of 1848, the crew of an American whaling ship, *Superior*, had a successful season, news of which spread quickly following their return to port in Hawaii. The following year 50 whaling ships headed north, and the fleet increased dramatically until 1852, when 224 whalers entered the Bering Sea region. Whalers were not the only newcomers to the area. Chapter 11 provides an excellent description of the vessels and commanders involved in the search for the missing Franklin expedition from the Pacific side of the illusive Northwest Passage.

Foreign whaling and trading activities were only some of the difficulties facing the Russian-American Company. At the company headquarters in St. Petersburg, enthusiasm for the distant trading enterprise was cooling, and thoughts of selling Alaska to the United States of America evolved into open discussions following the end of the American Civil War in 1865. Tsar Alexander was not interested in competing with American interests, and by 1867 the deal was settled: for the sum of 7.2 million dollars, Alaska became an American territory. Two years later Captain Charles Raymond boarded the 50-foot sternwheeler, *Yukon*, and made his way up the Yukon River to Fort Yukon, where (according to the author) he was cordially welcomed by the Hudson Bay Company manager. To no one's surprise, Charles Raymond's land survey proved that the trading post was well within the boundary of what had become United States territory. The following year the Hudson Bay personnel retreated up the Porcupine River and later all the way back into unquestionable Canadian territory.

In Chapter 14, the author reflects on the fate of the many Native groups in the Bering Strait Region. The latter half of the 19th century had brought considerable misery to them all. Trade had become part of the whaler's income, with alcohol and guns used freely as tender. The unconstrained flow of alcohol and diminishing sea mammal resources caused starvation on a large scale. Responsibility for the new U.S. territory passed from army to navy and finally to civil control. As stories of mass starvations reached the

outside world, U.S. revenue cutters increased their patrols, gradually reducing the illegal alcohol and firearms trade. Correspondingly the Russians improved their control of trade on the Asian side of the strait.

The 15th and final chapter of the book brings the 19th century to a close with the discovery of gold on Bonanza Creek in the Klondike. As soon as the news reached the south, thousands of eager prospectors started out for Alaska and the Yukon, bringing about yet another change in the lives of the Bering Strait peoples, particularly on the Alaskan side.

I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in Alaskan and Northeast Asian history. The research for the book is very impressive, as are the 69 pages of notes and the extensive bibliography. The map illustrations are sufficient. The reader will find a certain amount of redundancy between chapters and topics. However, considering the number of events, places, dates, and people encountered in this work, some degree of redundancy is actually helpful.

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FINDING DAHSHAA: SELF-GOVERNMENT, SOCIAL SUFFERING, AND ABORIGINAL POLICY IN CANADA. By STEPHANIE IRLBACHER-FOX. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2009. ISBN 978-0-7748-1624-3. 216 p., b&w illus., notes, bib., index. Cdn\$85.00.

There is a respectable and growing literature on the establishment of aboriginal self-government in Canada sited primarily within the fields of political science and political philosophy. We are beginning to be able to reflect upon the institutions, formal structures, and theories of aboriginal self-government, yet we know far less about its specific content and on-the-ground practices. At present, both the Canadian federal government and the Government of the Northwest Territories are engaged in negotiations for self-government with several northern indigenous communities, often touting self-government (and the related process of political devolution) as a route to aboriginal self-determination within the political structure of Canada. Hence, *Finding Dahshaa: Self-government, Social Suffering, and Aboriginal Policy in Canada*, by anthropologist Stephanie Irlbacher-Fox, is a timely and extremely welcome contribution.

*Finding Dahshaa* contains fascinating, ethnographically rich descriptions and analysis of formal negotiations for aboriginal self-government in the Northwest Territories. Despite official federal and territorial policies to devolve services to aboriginal communities, the mandate of government negotiators belies a reluctance of governments to relinquish bureaucratic authority. Irlbacher-Fox, who assisted teams negotiating on behalf of several aboriginal groups,