

EDIBLE AND MEDICINAL ARCTIC PLANTS: AN ELDER'S PERSPECTIVE. By ANNA ZIEGLER, AALASI JOAMIE and REBECCA HAINNU. Iqaluit, Nunavut: Inhabit Media, 2018. ISBN 978-1-77227-170-6. 128 p., maps, b&w and colour illus., bib. Softbound. Cdn\$22.24.

As someone who grew up in Iqaluit loving the local tundra, and later studying Inuit ethnobotany, this book is nostalgic and fresh. The beautiful macro photographs of the Arctic plants are so deeply familiar that they conjure up long-forgotten memories of walking along the mountainside in my home community: the feeling of the springy ground under my feet, the crinkly sounds of the land, and the earthy smells of the summer wind with the pine-like Labrador tea. The photography presented in this book is stunning and surpasses any other I've seen.

The text is simple and candidly captures the knowledge of Aalasi Joamie, a well-respected Inuit Elder and author. When reading this book, the reader gets a real sense of walking with her and learning about the plants as she sees them. The authors choose to forgo the need to botanically classify the plants with terminology or scientific nomenclature (mushrooms, moss, and lichens are included as “plants”), and instead they focus on capturing Joamie's Inuit *qaujimajatuqangit* (Inuit traditional knowledge). The book includes a preface and introduction by Joamie, and information about the traditional uses of 18 selected plants. People who are looking for an academic or botanical reference book may be disappointed by this text; however, the authors are clear from the beginning that they never intended this book for an academic audience. The book represents a snapshot of the one Elder's knowledge and is not meant to be an exhaustive list. The anecdotal style and organic structure of the writing make it appealing and accessible to anyone who has an interest in Arctic plants, travel, Inuit culture, or ethnobotany.

I feel that it is also worth noting the importance of this book within a larger context. For thousands of years, iterations of this traditional knowledge were passed on from one generation to the next, carefully learned over a lifetime, trialed and erred by the knowledge holder, and passed onto the next generations to hold. This passing along of oral information forms a chain that reaches back into a time that is completely unavailable to us otherwise. Even a single break in that chain would have left this information long forgotten in the past. This is ethnobotany. This knowledge is special. This legacy of knowledge is brought to light with lovely stories from Joamie's own family—accounts of her with her mother, observing, and learning to recognize and use plants, and notes of how she taught her own children to forage for food on the land. There are beautiful pictures of her mother (p. 10) and daughter (p. 5) who participated in this book.

The information captured here is part of the beginning efforts to turn oral traditional knowledge into written documentation. As the authors note, “We hope that other Elders and knowledgeable community members will

have opportunities to record and share their regional plant knowledge and memories so that a vibrant dialogue of Inuit traditional plant knowledge will be accessible to future generations” (p. 7). In the midst of the tremendous changes going on in the Canadian Arctic and a renewed interest from the next generations, books such as these are a welcome effort to ensure their inclusion in the larger fabric of Inuit traditional knowledge.

Paleah Black Moher
PhD Environmental and Chemical Toxicology
Ecotox Consulting
2607 Lincoln Road
Victoria, British Columbia V8R 6A5, Canada
paleah@alumni.uottawa.ca

SAM STEELE: A BIOGRAPHY. By ROD MACLEOD. Edmonton, Alberta: University of Alberta Press, 2018. ISBN 978-1-77212-379-1. 432 p., maps, b&w illus., bib., index. Softbound. Cdn\$39.99. Also available in eBook and PDF formats.

Rod Macleod, Professor Emeritus of History and Classics at the University of Alberta, has written an impressive biography of Sam Steele, a legendary early member of the North West Mounted Police (NWMP)—one of the “originals.” The distinguished historian of Western Canada, with his strong research interest in the late nineteenth century NWMP, has all the necessary credentials to write Steele's life story. In nine clearly presented and thoroughly researched chapters, prefaced with an introduction and concluding with a prologue, Steele emerges as a three-dimensional character, much more lively and realistic, than the self-portrait earnestly provided in his autobiography, *Forty Years in Canada*.

The Ontario-born Steele, both physically strong and courageous, participated in the Great March West of the NWMP. Within a decade in Macleod's words, he “had emerged as one of the chief troubleshooters of the Mounted Police, a man who could act coolly and decisively in an emergency” (p. 61). In the mid-1880s, the law officer supervised the Canadian Pacific Railway in its construction phase on the prairies and western British Columbia, led Steele's Scouts in the North West troubles in 1885, and administered Canadian law and justice in the Yukon during the turbulent days of the Klondike Gold Rush in the late 1890s. Steele's post-NWMP career in the South African War and then in the South African Constabulary, as well as his service in World War I, also receive full review. One puts down the volume with a full overview of the entire career of “one of the most celebrated Canadians of his generation” (p. 26).

The only shortcoming in the author's early pages concerns the absence of an in-depth review of Steele's early formative years. This omission is not in any way the author's fault, for as he points out, “There are almost no

sources for his childhood, his family life, his education, or his early adulthood” (p. xv–xvi). In *Forty Years in Canada*, Steele devotes less than five pages to cover the first 22 years of his life. As a young man, he apparently had no exposure to First Nations. The one reference to the First Nations in his youth simply mentions that at the age of 11 his widowed father and family of six children “moved into Orillia, which was no longer the red man’s home” (p. 4). He fails to mention that the Indian Department in the mid-1830s had expelled the resident Ojibwe (Chippewa) from their reserve at Coldwater, just west of Orillia. Then at Orillia, or The Narrows, white settlers had petitioned the government to move the Chippewa off the village site, forcing a sale of the Narrows Reserve. The Chippewa were obliged to move east of Orillia to land earlier abandoned by settlers, a reserve known today as Rama. Steele’s lack of any contact with Indigenous peoples in his formative boyhood years might help to explain his lack of understanding of them. In Alberta, he worked to stamp out the Sun Dance, and he allowed the police to arrest without warrants Plains First Nations people off the reserve, despite the promises of Treaty Seven for freedom of movement.

In *Forty Years in Canada*, Steele narrated his rise from backwoods farm boy to major general. The book, devoid of any intellectual probing, revealed his devotion to duty and his belief in strict military discipline. Thanks to Macleod’s consultation of Steele’s numerous diaries and letters to his wife, all recently acquired by the University of Alberta, we meet a different Samuel Benfield Steele—the public figure away from the public spot light. Through his marriage at age 40 to Marie Harwood, the daughter of a prominent Québec family, Sam acquired a warm and stable family relationship. The Protestant NWMP officer crossed the barrier of religion to marry Marie, who was a devout Roman Catholic. His letters to Marie are the most important part of the Sir Samuel Steele Collection (p. 365).

The NWMP commander in the Yukon thrived on work (p. 179). In the Yukon, Steele worked constantly on mountains of official paperwork, often to 2 or 3 a.m. He still wrote lengthy biweekly letters to his beloved Marie.

Everything comes at a cost; as Macleod points out. Steele’s growing public recognition throughout North America fed his vanity. Upon reaching his early fifties, his hair began to grey. Anxious that others perceive him to be as young as he felt he was, he began to use hair dye (p. 238). Another development, he “indulged himself in one of his favourite activities, having his photograph taken” (p. 235–236). In the Yukon, a certain social snobbery emerged. In a letter to Marie he criticized William Ogilvie, the Yukon Commissioner, for he “goes to the dinner of any Tom, Dick, and Harry in the country who are only common people” (p. 181).

Steele left the NWMP in 1900 to head a British Army unit recruited in Canada to fight for Britain in South Africa. In the South African War, Lord Strathcona’s Horse attracted the higher command’s positive attention. This led to its commander’s appointment as a divisional commander in

the newly formed South African Constabulary. The semi-military police force spent the last year of the war pursuing the remaining Boer commandos. In his autobiography, Steele wrote that in the concentration camps established by the British during the war to house Boer women and children, the inmates were “well sheltered in good tents and they were well fed (p. 368).” In contrast, Macleod disagrees with this pro-British Army assessment and notes that they “died by the thousands due to incompetent administration” (p. 222). Steele had no intent in his biography of revealing that the British were in any way less than virtuous.

The book’s last chapter, “An Old Soldier Fades Away: General Steele, 1914–1919,” includes a review of Steele’s supervision during the war of a British military district in England occupied almost entirely by Canadians. Perhaps he never did achieve his lifelong goal of becoming Commissioner of the NWMP, but in his last years, he did become a major general and was knighted. Rod Macleod is to be warmly congratulated for his excellent biography of an important Anglo-Canadian public figure in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

REFERENCE

Steele, S.B. 1915. *Forty years in Canada: Reminiscences of the Great North-West, with some account of his service in South Africa*. Toronto, Ontario: McClelland, Goodchild & Stewart.

Donald B. Smith
Professor Emeritus of History, University of Calgary
2831 11th Avenue NW
Calgary, Alberta T2N 1J1, Canada
smithd@ucalgary.ca

COLD RUSH: THE ASTONISHING TRUE STORY OF THE NEW QUEST FOR THE POLAR NORTH. By MARTIN BREUM. Montreal, Quebec: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2018. ISBN 978-0-7735-5363-7. 252 p., maps, bib., index. Hardbound. Cdn\$30.95. Also available as an epub.

Martin Breum explores contemporary Arctic politics from a journalist’s perspective, with a focus on the Danish and Greenlandic context, in his new book *Cold Rush*. The book is a compendium of chapters selected and translated from Breum’s Danish books, and it feels like a collection of essays. Short, introductory paragraphs provide useful context for each chapter, but the book itself lacks an overriding, central argument. The chapters instead provide snapshots of various issues and events that serve to illustrate the Danish and Greenlandic approach to Arctic affairs in the past decade or so.

Although published by a university press, *Cold Rush* is not a scholarly contribution to the subject in a traditional sense. Breum is a well-known Danish journalist with