
When I began to review this book I was asked the question, “Do you think it succeeds in doing what it was intended to do?” In this case the question seems almost the equivalent of asking, “how does one’s life succeed?” Or, “how does one’s life story succeed?” Even the intent is diffuse: there are so many intentions in the book, so many hopes, so many potential messages and uses, that only time will tell us how the book will be interpreted by its readers. If there is a single unifying theme in Cruikshank’s compilation, it is “interpretation.” *Life Lived Like a Story* is an invitation to partake in the breadth of human interpretation.

There are five voices in the book. Angela Sidney, a Tagish/Tlingit woman, takes the lessons of traditional language and lore and uses them to interpret experience in the present era. Kitty Smith, also Athapaskan/Tlingit, incorporates legends, place names and customs into a vivid account of the women in her family and their initiative and independence. A third Athapaskan/Tlingit woman, Annie Ned, weaves episodes of her life story into the significant songs, stories and other traditional teachings of her time. Julie Cruikshank recorded the stories and introduces them, building a frame for entering the realm of culture as it reveals itself in the life story. The fifth voice is autonomous, the pillar around which the other voices revolve: the voice of traditional story itself, always intimate with the teller but having a continuity all its own.

*Life Lived Like a Story* may well appeal to multiple readerships. Folklorists will recognize the themes of myth, legend and place names that echo in the book. Linguists are offered glimpses of Tagish, Tutchone and Tlingit languages—although the stories are recorded in English, Cruikshank retains Indigenous names. Angela Sidney, who died in early 1991 after the publication of the book, was the last speaker of Tagish, so Cruikshank’s work with her will have added value in preserving what is shown of the language.

The work has relevance to women’s studies, adding to a growing collection of Indigenous women’s life histories from across North America. Native and northern studies programs will find valued supplemental readings on topics ranging from contact history to band societies to
identity. It is less likely that the book would be picked up by the public for recreational reading; many of the stories are difficult for English speakers to understand. Nonetheless, there is an innate poetry in the stories that will appeal to some.

If there is a weakness in the structure of the book, it may indeed be that Cruikshank has attempted to provide too many frames for analysis. It is a challenge: when presenting life history from cultures and languages that speak very differently from those of most of the readers, how does one provide meaningful clues to interpretation? As Cruikshank herself points out (p. 4), even offering conventional ethnographic explanation from an outsider’s perspective may betray the insider’s perspective rather than elucidate it. Cruikshank does not overload the texts with theory, but what is supplied is fragmented. We learn about fieldwork and ethnographic construction, about myth and structuralism, and about life history as a method. Those familiar with Cruikshank’s previous publications will recognize some of the arguments about the use of oral tradition in teaching, and about the symbolism of women’s resourcefulness to be found in myth and legend. Each of these arguments has merit, and each opens another door to interpretation, but together they compete for the reflection they deserve.

What does integrate the book, however, is the relationship of the voices. Cruikshank’s candid insights into her interactions with these women, and her attention to the significant aspects of their lives and personalities, evoke the essence of her relationship with them in a way that few ethnographies succeed in doing. In the recent flurry of literature in anthropology and sociology on hermeneutics and the art of constructing text from experience, there has been a call for the “plurivocal” text. If, as many argue, anthropology has never really had scientifically persuasive success by revealing the insider’s knowledge through conventional texts written by outsiders, then perhaps it is time to let insiders speak for themselves (see, for example, Clifford 1988; Atkinson 1990; Marcus and Fischer 1986). The function of the ethnographer shifts radically. Although still a bridge between cultures, the relationship of the ethnographer to the storyteller parallels the relationship between the reader and the text. By explaining how culture presents and transforms itself through the fieldwork dialogue, the ethnographer assists the reader in interpreting and relating to the text.

Although Cruikshank may not have intended it to be so, this appears to be what she has done here. Long after the book has been mined for tidbits on linguistic and thematic constructions, puberty rites and gold rush lore, the value of the relationships contained within will be enduring—and, in my best guess, that will be the “proof of success.” There may be no
single definitive interpretation of the book and its contents, but there is a sense that progress has been made in understanding what cultural interpretation is all about.

Peggy Brizinski

References


Books devoted to the archaeology and/or physical anthropology of the circumpolar region are, as a rule, very rare. Rarer still are books on the peoples and past cultures of the far north designed to appeal to a broad public readership. Since 1987, however, two such books have gone to press: Frozen in Time by Beattie and Geiger (1987), first published in 1987; and the 1991 English edition of The Greenland Mummies by Hansen, Meldgaard and Nordqvist (1991).

Frozen in Time tells the tale of the exhumation and medical examination of the incredibly well-preserved bodies of three sailors associated with the ill-fated Franklin expedition to discover the Northwest Passage. Prior to the publication of this work the general public had been riveted (perhaps as much by our morbid curiosity with the dead as by any intellectually motivated interest) by the well-publicized (in newspapers, magazines and television) unveiling of the three 150-year-old faces—faces that could in fact have been our own. This, of course, virtually guaranteed the success of the book.

The Greenland Mummies describes the discovery, excavation and scientific study of the 500-year-old mummified remains of eight Greenlandic Inuit buried in two adjacent graves near the abandoned west Greenland settlement of Qilakitsoq. Though perhaps less immediately compelling to the ethnocentric European psyche than the frozen faces of John Torrington, John Hartnell and William Braine, The Greenland
Mummies offers potentially far greater rewards to the careful reader. These include a rare and intimate insight into the reconstructed world of the 15th-century west Greenland Inuit and a generally well-crafted introduction to the diverse, complex and highly sophisticated techniques employed by the nearly fifty researchers from Denmark and Greenland involved in the study of the prehistoric human remains from Qilakitsoq.

The Greenland Mummies is divided into nine chapters, each co-authored by a different group of specialists (in one case no fewer than twenty-eight co-authors are identified, which seems excessive). Throughout the volume, the printed text is generously supplemented by carefully drawn maps and figures and, in several instances, by absolutely stunning colour photographs. A detailed catalogue of the cultural remains (mainly items of skin clothing) associated with each burial is appended.

The scholastic diversity of the researchers contributing to this work is one of the strengths of The Greenland Mummies. In this book the reader is exposed to and learns from specialists representing an eclectic cross-section of modern archaeological, ethnohistorical and physical anthropological sub-disciplines. This diversity, however, is also one of the weaknesses of the volume.

Because this volume is comprised of a series of chapters written by independent groups of co-authors there is little continuity to the book beyond that of their common point of reference—the mummies themselves. This lack of continuity is exacerbated by the rather perplexing ordering and organization of some of the chapters.

Chapter 1 is devoted largely to an historical review of the Norse occupation of Greenland (which makes for interesting reading but one is forced to wonder what direct relevance it has to the immediate topic of the book). This rather peripatetic chapter also contains an idiosyncratic and largely out-of-date summary of “Inuit” prehistory, as assessment (based more on ethnohistorical documents than on baseline biological data) of the natural resources of the Nuussuaq Peninsula (the larger study area surrounding Qilakitsoq) and a very brief discussion of other archaeological sites found in the immediate vicinity of the burial site. The Greenland Mummies would have benefited immeasurably from a stronger, clearer introductory chapter outlining the background data of direct relevance to the rest of the text and introducing the material dealt with in subsequent sections.

Chapter 2 of this book contains a more or less straightforward description of the discovery and retrieval of the eight mummies from Qilakitsoq. Included in this section is a very clear discussion of how the burials were dated using corrected and calibrated C-14 dates. Lay readers will, I think, find this review very useful. Chapter 2 ends on a slightly
jarring note, however, with a detailed discussion of various processes of mummification. Though relevant to the book as a whole, this discussion seems out of place in a chapter ostensibly devoted to a general description of the retrieval of the mummies.

Pre-Christian Greenland Inuit perceptions of death and burial are discussed in Chapter 3. As an independent essay, this chapter could stand alone as an interesting and well-written document. Unfortunately, that is how it reads—as an independent document. No attempt is made to integrate this ethnohistorical review with the grave sites from Qilakitsoq or with the mummies retrieved from them.

Chapter 4 describes the substantive results of the many laboratory tests conducted on the Greenland mummies once they had been removed to Copenhagen. This chapter, the longest and most ambitious in the book, reads like a scientific detective story. Basic questions about the eight deceased Inuit are asked: What sex were they? How old were they when they died: What did they die of? Were they related? The answers are sought using modern laboratory techniques. Occasionally unexpected results were obtained, such as evidence for the presence of a malignant tumour in the cranium of one of the adults, raising new questions needing answers. All in all, this is an extremely interesting, informative and well-written section of the book.

One of the many unexpected, though not entirely unanticipated, results of the laboratory analysis of the Qilakitsoq mummies was the detection of facial tattooing scars on five of the six adult females. The process of detecting these markings (using infra-red photography) and a brief discussion of circumpolar conventions for facial tattooing are detailed in Chapter 5.

In the latter section of Chapter 5, the co-authors suggest that the revealed tattoo marks are stylistically similar to patterns of facial scari-fication recorded amongst ethnographic Inuit populations from western and eastern Greenland and the central Canadian Arctic. The authors also state that similar tattoo designs occur on carved depictions of human faces found in Dorset culture (ca. 2500-1000 B.P.) archaeological sites. In conjunction with this latter observation it is worth noting that evidence (in the form of a small, realistic ivory carving of a human face) for facial tattoo markings comparable to those preserved on the Greenland mummies has been reported from an early pre-Dorset (ca. 3900-3400 B.P.) site on northeastern Devon Island in the Canadian high Arctic (Helmer 1986).

The six adult and two infant mummies recovered from Qilakitsoq were found fully dressed in beautifully tailored skin clothing manufactured from contrasting textures and colours of seal, bird and caribou hide. Additional
pieces of apparel—loose parkas, trousers and kamiks (boots)—were also discovered in association with the bodies. The adaptive significance of Inuit clothing is discussed in Chapter 6. A lengthy and well-illustrated description of the techniques used to manufacture the various items and clothing associated with the mummies from west Greenland is also included (a more detailed review of each item of clothing recovered from Qilakitsoq is provided in Appendix 1).

From their general discussion of skin clothing manufacture, the co-authors of Chapter 6 move to a detailed description of the methods used to stabilize and conserve the skin garments from Qilakitsoq. This rather technical review is followed by an essay on early 16th-century through late 19th-century depictions (largely in painting and carved figures) of west Greenland Inuit garb.

Each of the topics covered in Chapter 6—the review of skin clothing manufacturing techniques, the discussion of conservation strategies and the historical overview of changing clothing styles—is interesting in its own right. Presented as a palimpsest, however, this complex interweaving of topics detracts from the not-insubstantial contribution of the chapter.

Chapter 7 of The Greenland Mummies assesses the palaeo-environmental context of west Greenland during the late 15th century—the period when the eight individuals buried at Qilakitsoq were thought to have been alive. This begins with a clearly written and informative discussion of how palaeo-climates can be reconstructed through the $\delta^{18}O/\delta^{16}O$ isotopic analysis of ice cores extracted from the Greenland ice cap. A detailed account of the mineral residues found amongst folds in the mummies’ clothing follows. Here, the co-authors demonstrate (based on the discovery of several grains of a rare mineral not found in close proximity to the burial site) that at least some of the individuals buried at Qilakitsoq had traveled quite widely in the west Greenland district immediately prior to their demise.

Chapter 7 also includes a summary of the plant materials found in association with the mummies (i.e., grasses used to line the soles of kamiks, plants used to line the individual graves, and pollen and plant fragments discovered in the internal organs of one of the mummies). This chapter (and indeed the book) concludes with a discussion of the changes in levels of heavy metal pollutants that have occurred in west Greenland since the 15th century.

In many respects The Greenland Mummies is an interesting and worthy book. As noted in the introduction to this review, casual readers will be informed about the significant site of Qilakitsoq, the eight Inuit that were buried there and how these 15th-century west Greenlanders lived. They will also learn a great deal about the vast battery of sophisticated
analytical techniques that archaeologists, physical anthropologists, palynologists and climatologists can bring to bear on their investigation of the past.

Despite all of these positive attributes, however, there is one glaring omission in the text of The Greenland Mummies that, in my opinion, detracts from the volume as a whole. In North America, Australia and New Zealand (and other regions around the globe where Western colonial populations currently constitute a majority), Aboriginal peoples are beginning to voice their dismay at what they perceive to be a co-option of their past by largely non-Native archaeologists, physical anthropologists and other researchers. There is growing opposition amongst North American Native peoples to the excavation, display and/or curation of human remains. This has led to active demands by Native organizations for the reburial of skeletal remains housed in museums and laboratories and the cessation of all grave excavations. In 1986, the Society for American Archaeology (the major professional body of North American archaeologists) formally recognized these concerns, though the S.A.A., could not, and still does not, support the request to cease all recovery and scientific study of human remains (Kintigh 1990).

In Canada, the study of Indian and Inuit skeletal remains has also become a hotly contested political issue. Most Canadian museums and archaeology/anthropology departments have removed Native skeletal remains from public display. Archaeologists are becoming increasingly reluctant to remove human remains fortuitously discovered in the course of their excavations. The treatment of Aboriginal skeletal remains continues to be a pressing policy issue of the Canadian Archaeological Association. ²

In The Greenland Mummies we are told of the discovery of the bodies of the eight Inuit, their recovery from the grave site, their shipment to Denmark for analysis and conservation and their return to Greenland, where they have been placed on public display in the Greenland National Museum. Nowhere in this volume are the ethics of dealing with the dead addressed. It is possible that Native Greenlanders do not have the same degree of politicized opposition to dealing with the remains of their ancestors as do other Aboriginal groups. Even so, given that The Greenland Mummies has been targeted towards a largely English-speaking North American audience, the editors of this volume could have (and perhaps should have) dealt with this issue head on. As it now stands, The Greenland Mummies runs the risk of contributing to the negative image that archaeologists and physical anthropologists already have amongst Native peoples.

The preceding remarks not withstanding, I recommend this book to
anyone with an interest in Arctic prehistory and ethnography. The authors and publishers are to be credited for making the results of such a thorough and sophisticated study available to the English-speaking academic community and public at large.

James W. Helmer

Notes
1 *The Greenland Mummies* was first published in Danish and Greenlandic in 1985 (Hansen, Meldgaard and Nordqvist 1985a). A 1985 article in the National Geographic (Hansen, Meldgaard and Nordqvist 1985b) first brought the Qilakitsoq burials to the attention of the English-speaking public.

2 It is important to note here that members of the S.A.A. and C.A.A. staunchly maintain the legitimacy of examining prehistoric skeletal material and the importance of the scientific results that can be obtained from such studies. Archaeologists working in Canada and the U.S. are also sensitive to the concerns of Aboriginal peoples. Continued dialogue, interaction and co-operation at all levels between archaeologists, physical anthropologists and Native politicians are necessary to avoid confrontation and loss of access to this important part of the archaeological record.

References


*Indian Country* is essentially a journalist endeavour, written to inform
the interested layman. It is not, in my opinion, intended for a scholarly audience. This is not to imply, however, that the book is not informative or without value. Within the scope of its objectives, Krotz’ book is well written and useful.

The content of *Indian Country* is structured around the author’s visits to five reserves across Canada, representing the First Nations of Cree, Mohawk, Kiwakiutl, Maliseet and Ojibway. Each visit involved a series of interviews by Krotz with band chiefs, administrators, elders and ordinary band members. Krotz makes no claim that the persons he interviewed are representative of the opinions of the particular band; rather, he appears to believe that diversity will yield valuable insights. Interspersed between the chapters on the different reserves are interviews with persons who have been prominent in Indian affairs in Canada during the last couple of decades, including Thomas Berger, Lloyd Barber, Keith Penner and George Erasmus.

The strong point of this book is the ability of Krotz to focus on the problems faced by Indians on Canada’s reserves and to identify the obstacles and dilemmas confronted in their solution. One is the dilemma between the desire for economic modernization to deal with the deplorable economic and social conditions on most reserves and the threat such development presents to the retention of traditional cultural values and institutions. Krotz finds a good example of this situation in the Cape Mudge band on Vancouver Island. Band leadership supports the construction of a resort to capitalize on the expanding tourist industry in the Campbell River area. Some band members argue, however, that the proposed construction site is on sacred ground that should be left alone because it is an important part of the band’s heritage.

Another critical insight Krotz provides from his reserve visits is the pervasiveness of politics in Indian life. As Krotz points out, on many reserves, “it is the only game in town,” because public money supports nearly everything on reserves, including pay-roll. This situation not only has created a dependency syndrome for Indians, but in many respects also structures the role of band leadership, which becomes preoccupied with getting money out of the federal government. It also, unfortunately, affects the distribution of wealth amongst band members on many reserves.

The interviews with Berger, Barber, Penner and Erasmus, in my opinion, are of less value to the reader than Krotz’ insights gained from his reserve visits. What value they have lies in the more general perspectives these individuals place on Indian problems in Canada and the solutions they advocate based upon their involvement with Indian issues.

In conclusion, while *Indian Country* will not contribute greatly to the
expanding body of scholarly literature on Indian issues because of its lack of depth and a developed methodology, it is an extremely valuable book for those individuals new to this area. Krotz captures the essence of reserve life and allows the reader to identify with the distinctiveness of Indian cultures and the frustration of Indian peoples as they seek to preserve those cultures. *Indian Country* would be excellent supplementary reading in introductory Native Studies courses.

J. Anthony Long


Sarah Carter’s *Lost Harvests* is a timely book on a neglected subject: the history of Indian reserve farming. To date, Canadian Native history has tended to focus on a number of stock questions, including the treaties, the contact process, the fur trade and the Riel Rebellions. Carter, on the other hand, has boldly moved away from these standard subjects to open up a new realm for discussion—one with potential to yield new material, questions and points of view for those interested in Canadian Native history.

Despite its non-traditional subject, *Lost Harvests* is a history researched and written in a traditional historical manner: it is descriptive, chronological and based on standard archival and secondary sources. The book deals, specifically, with the attempts made by the Plains Indians of Treaty 4 to break the prairie soil and begin farming under the Indian agricultural program officially adopted by the federal government in 1878. With the rapid disappearance of prairie game, the Plains people were feeling the acute pressure of hunger and recognized farming as a new potential food base. The idea of a government-managed agricultural program had grown out of the Plains treaties signed a few years earlier. Treaties 4 and 6 contained promises on the part of the Crown to provide the signing Indians with farm implements, livestock and seed. As a result of these promises, the government was technically obligated to provide the Indians with the means to succeed.

Tracing the struggle of the Indian farmers from the 1870s through the 1910s, *Lost Harvests* attacks the established myth that Indian indifference and apathy were the root cause of the failure of their attempts at farming. This book ably demonstrates the contrary. It shows how Indians were willing and enthusiastic, and how it was the government’s lack of concern
for Indian welfare, its characterization of Indians as lazy and indolent, and its short-sighted planning that undermined and ultimately caused the failure of all attempts to make Indians successful agriculturalists.

Carter’s descriptions of government dealings with Indian agriculture are detailed: *Lost Harvests* discusses the “home farms,” the nature of supplying reserves with implements and stock, the effects of the 1885 Rebellion on government attitudes toward Indian agriculture, and comments on many of the personalities involved in the administration of the policy. Valuable also is a (lamentably short) comparison between Indian and Euro-Canadian pioneer farmers, and the contribution of Indian women to farming. In the last chapters of the book Carter outlines how modern mechanized farming bypassed reserve farmers and doomed their attempts to compete with their settler counterparts.

Carter has produced a well researched, illustrated, and extensively documented book. With this work, students of Native history finally have access to a detailed outline of the development of government policy dealing with Indian farmers living on the reserves in the Canadian west. *Lost Harvests* has set a scene where there previously was none. In addition, by focusing on the early years of reserve agriculture, Carter has also created a base for research into twentieth century reserve life. In these ways the book makes an invaluable contribution to Canadian and Native history.

And yet, in the opinion of this reviewer, the book has characteristics that undermine its research conclusions. Firstly, *Lost Harvests* appears to have an unstated agenda of putting the turn-of-the-century federal government on trial for the faltering of prairie Indian reserve agriculture. The charge is negligence. Since the book aims to dispel the myth of Indian responsibility for the farming failure, to reverse the charges and blame the enormous bureaucracy in Ottawa seems initially logical. The arguments in defence of the Indian position are sound and solid, and Carter illustrates in great detail how and why they were unable to succeed.

At the same time, however, there is minimal explanation or investigation into why the federal government failed. Carter provides little historical context for the events she describes, and does not investigate Victorian Canadian attitudes towards concepts of “social welfare,” “progress,” “economy” or “success.” If this had been done, the actions of the Ottawa politicians would have seemed more logical. Excusable is another issue. It could easily have been pointed out, for example, how during the crucial first years of the Indian agricultural program, between 1878 and 1880, the Macdonald government was in an economic straightjacket, unwilling to spend on ventures not obviously contributing to the nation’s “progress,” and how that same government looked jealously south,
to America, for definitions of that “progress.”¹

Secondly, *Lost Harvests* too easily foists late twentieth-century morality and value judgements onto nineteenth-century events. As a result, instead of gaining insight into the complexity and political nature of the Ottawa-Indian relationship, the reader is simply left with a burning but perhaps shallow indictment of government actions. In this sense, *Lost Harvests* has missed out on one of the challenges of writing history: not to accuse or absolve, but rather to understand the actions of the various parties involved; to create a more meaningful sequence out of old historical details; and to reveal the essential humanity inherent in historic events.

Despite these difficulties, which should not be ignored or catered to, the book is mandatory material for any Native history library. *Lost Harvests* can be commended for bringing together a large amount of important information.

Laurie Meijer-Drees

Notes

Their life stories tell us as much about the present as about the past, as much about ideas of community as about individual experience; they call our attention to the diverse ways humans formulate such linkages. When they talk about their lives, these women use narrative genres familiar to anyone sharing their cultural background but not always clear to cultural outsiders. They may, for example, explain an event by telling a story in which a protagonist suffers complex repercussions because he behaved rashly, a point easily lost on a Western audience, that sometimes confuses hubris with indiv...