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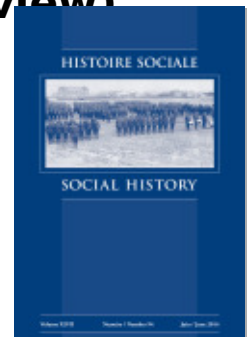
Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life by James Daschuk (review)

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to promote active learning, individualized instruction, and links between school and society. Teacher candidates are still being reminded to move away from the lecture podium and to engage their students, parents are continually called upon to take a more active role in their children's learning, and demands continue to be placed upon curriculum developers to make an interminably out-of-date school curriculum relevant to students' lives. Indeed, whether progressive education has found, or will ever find, its way into the schools is still a matter of debate. Is the history of progressive education, then, the history of failed promises? That is, why do school reformers continue to push for the educational changes that Christou first locates nearly a century ago? Christou concludes that his study "opens exciting apertures for future historical research" (p. 141), and he is right. Did progressive education remain a defining feature of educational discourse in the post-war years? To what extent did the discourse on progressive education affect public policy? Did teachers actually buy into it, and to what extent was progressive education practiced in the schools? Did parents support it? And, perhaps most importantly, did students accept it? These are only a few questions raised by a superb study on education in Ontario in the interwar period. *Progressive Education* has indeed become required reading for any student of educational history.

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DASCHUK, James – *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life*. Regina: University of Regina Press, 2013. Pp. 318.

James Daschuk's work has gained considerable favourable attention, from academics and non-academics alike, for its vast temporal scope, its similarly broad source base, and its discussion of the scope of European disease and marginalization of Aboriginal peoples within the formative years of a nation. Indeed, Daschuk suggests a national narrative that acknowledges the "chasm between the health conditions of First Nations peoples and mainstream Canadians." (p. ix) Daschuk's project, which began two decades ago as his PhD dissertation, has grown out of connections to public health and economic history research: connections that speak to a theme of interconnectedness among diverse First Nations-government interactions over time. Yet Daschuk also seeks to distinguish his work from policy-focused studies of the marginalization of Aboriginal peoples, focusing instead on the economic and environmental conditions that worked together to reinforce disparity. He argues that Europeans increasingly exploited these conditions, even while realizing that Aboriginal peoples were suffering as a result. The book is therefore also a call for a re-evaluation of existing narratives in Canadian historical consciousnesses.

Clearing the Plains considers the regions that would become Rupert's Land and later western Canada. One of the particular strengths of this work is

that through this broad perspective, it highlights both change and continuity in Indigenous peoples' interactions both before and after European contact. In so doing, the work supplements well the notion in contemporary Aboriginal history scholarship that contact itself may not always have been the momentous turning point that European observers assumed it to be. Daschuk's analysis begins with an overview of changes in disease and environmental conditions prior to contact; in particular, major climate change beginning in about the thirteenth century sparked upheaval and adaptation, and these new interactions formed the basis for a number of the distinct cultural groups as they exist today. Furthermore, these changes also sparked a need for water, game, and resource management, reinforcing the networks of natural resource interests upon which Europeans acted and, increasingly, intruded. It was, he argues, the deliberate, corporate action on the part of newcomers that created wholesale change by supporting preventable disease and poverty among Aboriginal peoples.

Indeed, the very networks that facilitated trade both before and after Europeans' arrival also became vectors for disease, even while they facilitated the fur trade and some Aboriginal peoples benefited from it. Fur trade concerns required middlemen to fill gaps in the sparsely-populated northwest, and Daschuk argues that the new interactions forced by the fur trade and by the first smallpox epidemics created ethnic hybridization and territorial expansion among some groups. And while Daschuk does not make this explicit, these events also suggest that these first European interventions in the northwest sparked events that would provide the background for government interventions, in turn solidifying European ideas of territory and culture in the post-Confederation period. Until the mid-eighteenth century, Daschuk notes, equestrianism and direct links to global trade had been the main networks for conveying introduced disease. As the influence of the fur trade expanded into new regions (the plains, for instance), it also created new conditions for contagion. These were not merely two-sided interactions between Aboriginal peoples and newcomers; rather, economic and demographic changes also created power shifts among Aboriginal peoples.

Significantly for scholars considering the antecedents of contemporary Aboriginal peoples, Daschuk's discussion of late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century smallpox epidemics indicates that when middlemen roles and regions were suddenly left open, they paved the way for the emergence of peoples as they exist today. When these shifts were occurring, European and diverse Aboriginal interests alike became threatened by the conflicts that sprang up. A particularly vivid example is that of the A'anin, who were less affected by the smallpox epidemic because they were marginal to the fur trade, handling only in low-value wolf pelts and opting to keep beaver populations high for water management purposes: Daschuk highlights these individualized interests within common experiences throughout the book. Within these localized examples, though, Daschuk cautions against assuming that these groups were homogeneous, citing the Cree, who migrated west after the 1782 smallpox epidemic and were soon incorporated into Cree groups already living there.

In stating this caveat, Daschuk highlights the almost universal impacts of introduced disease on Aboriginal populations, but this illustration is also a useful reminder for historians that cultures, like regions and ideas, have a history, and that identities as we see them today have at times been shaped by colonial action as well as by people's responses to it. Yet at times, greater specificity would give Daschuk's analyses further traction within contemporary political climates. While the Métis appear throughout the book as participants in economic exchanges, it is not always clear whether their separate cultural and political status set them apart from First Nations peoples' experiences that Daschuk outlines, or whether their familial and economic ties made them subject to the same concerns.

Daschuk's focus and analysis then turns to the expanding European settlement and control over Aboriginal peoples from 1821 onward. A Hudson's Bay Company monopoly meant that the company took on diverse administrative roles, including regulating game conservation by closing key fur trade posts. Daschuk shows that while ecological, health, and economic conditions disproportionately affected Aboriginal peoples, increasingly, Europeans also capitalized on the power imbalance. As a result, the focus shifts from Aboriginal peoples' actions within changing economic (primarily fur trade) interests, to their reactions to European action. While it is not a central point of analysis, Indigenous action does not disappear entirely from Daschuk's consideration; indeed, several illustrations, such as that of Cree efforts to infect Fort Pitt with tuberculosis after the fort ran out of the vaccine are noteworthy because they underpin Daschuk's intention to use disease as a lens to highlight European impacts on Indigenous peoples.

Within this shift to increasing European control—emphasized, Daschuk argues, by the often-fraught implementation of the Numbered Treaties—Daschuk implicates the Canadian government in wilfully ignoring or exacerbating poor living conditions and tuberculosis outbreaks on reserves beginning in the 1870s. Beyond pointing out injustice and culpability, in conveying the widespread poor conditions on reserves and the similarly universal government responses, Daschuk's evidence also points to the beginnings of collective identities and action among Aboriginal peoples. In drawing on common experience, they were able to cite collective concerns, and in this way, the book also prompts readers to consider changes political and intercultural relationships over time.

In keeping with its expansive scope, *Clearing the Plains* is a useful resource on a number of different levels: as a piece of activism, as a teaching resource, and as a means of sparking further, perhaps more localized historical study. Its temporal and geographic breadth highlights the importance of interconnectedness of events, relationships, and historical ideas on small and large scales. In showing the range of implications of European intrusion into northwestern Indigenous societies, Daschuk also seeks to impart a sense of collective awareness, and responsibility among readers. As an instructional resource, Daschuk's analysis emphasizes that the pre-contact period was not ahistorical, and that Indigenous adaptation has underpinned geographic and interpersonal relationships. Indeed, in showing both continuity and change over time, Daschuk enables readers to complicate the notion of "traditional" identities, territories, roles, or expectations: in other

words, recognizing Indigenous territory means recognizing its changes over time. In engaging this diversity of questions, *Clearing the Plains* is well placed to spark questions and discussion among a similarly diverse readership.

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DOLAN, Claire – *Les procureurs du Midi sous l’Ancien Régime*, Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2012, 286 p.

Spécialistes de la procédure, les procureurs occupaient une place stratégique au sein du système judiciaire français sous l’Ancien Régime. Contrairement aux avocats, formés dans les universités et experts du droit, les procureurs se plaçaient plutôt en position d’intermédiaires entre les justiciables et l’institution judiciaire, praticiens les guidant dans le dédale des cours et des démarches procédurières. C’est sur eux que l’historienne Claire Dolan a choisi de braquer ses feux, plus spécifiquement sur les procureurs du sud de la France (Aix-en-Provence, Marseille, Toulouse et Grenoble), dans ce livre qui se lit non pas comme une synthèse mais plutôt comme une vaste expérience méthodologique sur un sujet particulièrement difficile à documenter. L’auteure met sa considérable expérience des archives et sa vaste connaissance du monde judiciaire au service de cette enquête qui multiplie les perspectives sur le métier de procureur et sur les hommes qui en ont accompli les tâches.

L’un des grands mérites de ce livre est la totale transparence de son auteure face à sa démarche. Les enjeux sont clairs, les sources et méthodes sont minutieusement décrites et les limites de la preuve, et donc de l’argumentation, sont exposées sans détour. De son propre aveu, « ce livre s’agite en diverses directions, sans toujours refermer les portes qu’il franchit » (p. 12). Dolan a ainsi choisi de poser toutes les questions pertinentes sans nécessairement avoir à sa disposition le matériel pour y répondre de manière satisfaisante, ce qui rend parfois la lecture de l’ouvrage un peu frustrante. En revanche, on ne peut qu’admirer sa virtuosité méthodologique et la grande rigueur de ses analyses. Bref, si elle ne referme pas toutes les portes ouvertes, elle laisse des pistes excitantes et, surtout, un modèle à suivre pour les historiens du domaine.

La première partie de l’ouvrage s’attache à replacer le procureur dans son environnement urbain et professionnel, dans lequel le Palais de justice occupait une place centrale. Nuançant les interprétations de l’historien Robert Jacob sur la symbolique de l’organisation spatiale du Palais de justice, Dolan évoque la coexistence de multiples juridictions au sein d’un même bâtiment et l’attribution d’espaces à chacune, selon des hiérarchies subtiles, mais aussi des contraintes pratiques. Le Palais d’Aix-en-Provence était donc au carrefour de toutes les juridictions, mais incarnait également la confusion apparente des divers niveaux de justice. L’enceinte du Palais de justice accueillait aussi des commerçants et