

BOOK REVIEWS

*Coming Home to Indigenous
Place Names in Canada*

Margaret Wickens Pearce

Orono, ME: Canadian-American
Center, University of Maine, 2017.
US\$7.00.

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Coming Home to Indigenous Place Names in Canada is a foldout display-ready wall map of Canada, hypsometrically tinted to highlight the physiographic landscape of the northern portion of North America, and labelled entirely and only in selected Indigenous place names as variously provided by First Nations, bands, and tribal organizations from across the country. Terrestrial place names are applied in black type, marine or lacustrine or fluvial in blue, and all of them, numbering in the hundreds, in the orthography in modern use by the provider. Many, especially in the northern and eastern portions of Canada, are superscribed in their syllabic variants, and all of them, terrestrial and not, are subscribed with the approximate English translation.

Blue vectors along various shorelines delineate known Indigenous marine highways. Measuring forty-two inches by thirty-two inches, it is a visually striking cartographic product.

Pearce notes in a short introduction how Indigenous toponyms are much more than geographical markers, variously “describing,” as they do, the appearances, shapes, effects, characters, or cultural and material resource bases of the larger cultural landscapes in which they are embedded. Of great antiquity, Indigenous toponyms are directional aids, shorthand for the oral histories and the activities of ancestral agents in and by which they were constituted, landmarks both material and spiritual, and statements of ownership and use and occupation of traditional territories all at once.

In remapping this country through an Indigenous lens by jettisoning the toponyms familiar to most Canadians, and replacing them with those of the original occupants of this land, *Coming Home to Indigenous Place Names in Canada* deserves to be mounted on the walls of schools, museums, cultural centres, and so on, and it should be distributed as widely as possible. It is an important contribution to the process of “making visible” that which has been rendered

“invisible” to the majority of settler society for far too long and, thus, to the process of decolonizing the Western geographical imagination in this country.

It should be acknowledged, of course, that this map, like all maps delineated in a two-dimensional register, is again evidence that Indigenous practices of resistance and recovery, by whatever means, inevitably run up against the reality that they must recycle and adapt to forms of representation that once served empire and colonization. If informed only by the regional familiarity of this reviewer, the rationale for the selection of some toponyms, at the expense of others, is not clear. Certainly, some of this is the consequence of the politics of land claims and the contestations they generate. It is also likely that, because of the loss of cultural knowledge over many generations, toponymic coverage is geographically uneven. Pearce properly acknowledges how the toponyms on this map were and are the intellectual property of the First Nations, Métis, or Inuit peoples on whose territories they appear, but the territories themselves are not shown on the map. The restrictions of scale, along with the prior choice to privilege the thematization of the topographic base, obviously placed restrictions on print display options.

This said, this reviewer could not help but think of the range of possibilities if this map were to be placed in a geographic information system such that the toponymic landscape could not only be sensually integrated into the wider ethnographic landscape but also selectively “scaled up” to regional and/or local levels. In short, why not be bold and envision it as but “one plate” in an expanded and ever-expanding “Indigenous Atlas of Canada”? Put another way, *Coming Home to Indigenous Place Names in Canada* is, specifically, a much needed contribution to the

visualization of an alternative geography of this country; however, potentially it helps establish the ground upon which truth and reconciliation may be realized more generally.

*Raven Walks around the World:
Life of a Wandering Activist*

Thom Henley

Madeira Park, BC: Harbour
Publishing, 2017. 272 pp.
\$32.95 paper.

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IN *Raven Walks around the World*, Henley shares parts of his personal journey of activism, travel, and lifelong work with Indigenous peoples around the world. Through his stories, Henley illuminates the determination of all Indigenous peoples to protect and manage their homelands.

Henley, also known as “Huckleberry,” begins with an intriguing story of his adventures as a young university student who hitchhiked from Michigan to Alaska in spring 1970. To escape the Vietnam War draft, Henley stowed away on a Norwegian ship and eventually landed in Vancouver. A few years later, conversation with another traveller piqued his interest about the “Queen Charlotte Islands” – later officially renamed “Haida Gwaii” – and he boarded the ferry in Prince Rupert to go there.

It didn’t take long for Henley to develop a deep love and respect for the Haida people and their territory. As he explains, “Here was the temperate rainforest of fairy tales, an enchanting garden of massive moss-draped trees: western red cedar, yellow cypress, Sitka spruce and western hemlock with bases three to six metres in