

Travellers through Empire: Indigenous Voyages from Early Canada by Cecilia Morgan

J.R. (Jim) Miller

Volume 110, Number 1, Spring 2018

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1044334ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1044334ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

The Ontario Historical Society

ISSN

0030-2953 (print)

2371-4654 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Miller, J. (. (2018). Review of [*Travellers through Empire: Indigenous Voyages from Early Canada* by Cecilia Morgan]. *Ontario History*, 110(1), 122–124.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1044334ar>

Confederacy Council and its replacement with an elected government imposed by Ottawa. She assumes that all of her readers are familiar with what has transpired in Six Nations history from 1924 to 2015. In an all-too-brief conclusion (less than four pages), the author abruptly drops into her narrative the work of the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the areas of land claims, education, and environ-

ment. Using the historic metaphor, “polishing the chain,” the author then calls for a new era of mutual respect in order to prevent future policy disasters that too often has marred British and Canadian policies since 1784 (241).

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Travellers through Empire

Indigenous Voyages from Early Canada

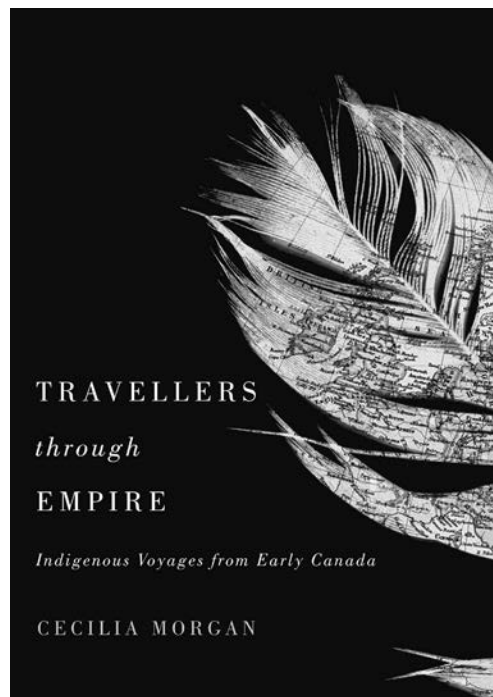
By Cecilia Morgan

Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University
Press 2017. 326 pages \$39.95 hardcover
ISBN 9780773551343 (www.mqup.ca)

While most examinations of Indigenous peoples in North America focus on the impact of an expanding Europe on the ‘new’ continent and its native inhabitants, historian Cecilia Morgan reverses the perspective to examine First Nations men and women who journeyed to the United Kingdom from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries. In this fine-grained study, the University of Toronto historian considers how the North American voyageurs were affected by their exposure to the metropole, and occasionally also influenced Britons.

As readers of Morgan's earlier work on nineteenth-century political rhetoric, heroic historical symbols and people, and historical commemoration have come to expect, *Travellers through Empire* is based on thorough research, and provides thoughtful analysis within a presentation that is clear and persuasive. Her subjects this time had varied reasons for travelling to Scotland

or England. Some, like the part-Cherokee John Norton, had been shaped by birth and early years in Scotland. Norton, whose life spanned the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, represented the end of the era in which diplomacy and military alliance dominated Native-newcomer relations in the future eastern Canada. Several others, such as the Methodist missionaries Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby), and George Copway (Kahgegahbowh)



sought metropolitan support for their evangelical work in British North America during an era when immigrants dominated their homeland and strategic alliance was no longer valued by the British. Both Jones and Copway ended up married to British women, becoming what Morgan terms examples of “intimate entanglements within Empire.” Catherine Sunego Sutton (Nahneebahweequa), another visitor whose voyage was facilitated by missionaries, this time Quakers, had a material purpose for travelling to the heart of empire.

Another important form of imperial-colonial intimacy in the nineteenth century beyond marriage between Indigenous visitors and metropolitan women were the experiences of children of the fur trade in the Hudson’s Bay Company lands. The most noteworthy of the migrant students, perhaps, was the gossipy and highly literate Letitia Hargrave. During the Victorian century, other manifestations of the North American presence in the heart of empire were Anicinabe performers who were exhibited in London in the 1840s, and, later, stage performers such as poet Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake) and actor and political critic John Brant-Sero (Ojijatekha). Among them, Morgan’s “travelers” covered a lengthy period of colonial-imperial interaction and demonstrated the various facets of the relationship between those of the far flung colonies of North America and the metropolitans. Throughout, the author is as sensitive to the changing context of events and social structures in Britain as she is revealing of the visitors’ responses to the treatment they received.

Travellers through Empire is concerned to lay bare the metropole’s effects on the North Americans. And, as is typical of all Morgan’s work, “gender [is] a central category of analysis throughout” (15). In some

cases the volume covers people and events that are fairly well known. The missionaries Jones and Copway and performer Pauline Johnson, for example, have had their lives recounted before, though not always with as much concern for gender implications as Morgan displays. Others, such as the children of fur-trade worthies and John Brant-Sero, are not as widely known, and it might be that that novelty makes the accounts of their experiences somewhat more engaging.

Morgan’s preoccupation with gender and racial identity—both certainly important features of nineteenth-century Indigenous experience—leads her to underestimate the very practical purpose of many of her visitors and sojourners. The missionaries were abroad to advance the material interests of their proselytizing efforts. Nahneebahweequa, an Anicinabe petitioner of Queen Victoria, sought the crown’s help to reverse punitive measures colonial figures in the Indian department had taken against her and her husband. The children who studied and boarded in the United Kingdom were embarked on a very definite mission, as were the performers. Perhaps labelling all the subjects of her analysis “travellers” implicitly undermines the vocational or advocacy-focused nature of their presence in the United Kingdom. There are also some unexplained anomalies in the coverage. John Norton received a pension of £200 a year, a very large sum, for his military service in the War of 1812 (46), but is financially embarrassed by the cost of his son’s education in Britain by 1819 (49). And it is debatable that Peter Jones was “clearly committed to certain aspects of assimilation” (72) because he supported prohibition of alcohol and an early form of residential schooling. Jones’s program was one of Christian acculturation that was intended to produce fully bicultural people, like Kahkewaquonaby, who could

succeed in both Indigenous and immigrant British North America.

Such quibbles do not detract from the overall high quality of *Travellers through Empire*. Cecilia Morgan has made some interesting Indigenous individuals better known to readers, usually in an engaging and informative way. Reversing the impe-

rial gaze has produced another fine piece of historical description and analysis from a historian who is obviously at the height of her powers.

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This Colossal Project *Building the Welland Ship Canal, 1913-1932*

By Roberta M. Styran and Robert R. Taylor

Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016. \$44.95

Hardcover ISBN 978-0-7735-2 (www.mqup.ca)

The principal objective in Roberta Styron and Robert Taylor's *This Colossal Project* is to recount the saga of men and machines, policy and practice, construction and operation of the fourth Welland Ship Canal from 1913-1932. This is effected in the context of the local, regional, national, and international significance of this corridor of canals from 1824 to the present. It is the second volume of what they declare to be a "little appreciated chapter of twentieth-century Canadian enterprise and achievement" and, as the title implies, "one of Canada's most spectacular technological accomplishments" (xv).

The official opening of the Welland Ship Canal in 1932 occurred in a period of an emerging sense of national identity marked by several developments: Canada's role in the "Great War"; its participation in the deliberations at Versailles

1919 and the League of Nations in 1920; the assertion of Canadian legislative independence by the Statute of Westminster in 1931; and the contribution of the "Group of Seven" and literary scholars to the growing

emotional connection to "our home and native land." For Styran and Taylor, the demonstration of Canadian technology and business acumen deployed in the building of the Welland Ship Canal was "further proof of growing national maturity" (xx).

In developing this thesis, successive chapters detail the bureaucratic and technological efforts behind the completion of the canal's spectacular prism and lifts, as well as

the measures taken to control the "natural, essential, but dangerous force" (104), the water, which the Welland's engineers and contractors exploited for the locks and power, and controlled for flood prevention.

