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Getting Good Crops: Economic and Diplomatic Survival Strategies of the Montana Bitterroot Salish Indians, 1870-1891. By Robert J. Bigart.

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Because Konefal neglects to situate her study in a longer trajectory of Mayan and Guatemalan history, at times it seems ahistorical. Historians in the United States and Guatemala have documented Mayan organizing and their relationship to national leaders and governments during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Yet chapter 2, “Mayas Mobilized,” suggests that Maya first began to mobilize and develop connections to national politics during the mid-1940s. Placing her findings within a broader longitudinal context would have allowed Konefal to contribute to historical debates about how Mayan relationships with the state, Ladinos, and each other have changed over time.

These omissions notwithstanding, *For Every Indio Who Falls* is a rich and insightful book. Engagingly written, and grounded in the voices of Mayan activists, it will help scholars rethink the role ethnicity played in Guatemala’s civil war.

David Carey Jr.

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Getting Good Crops: Economic and Diplomatic Survival Strategies of the Montana Bitterroot Salish Indians, 1870–1891. By Robert J. Bigart. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010. 304 pages. \$39.95 cloth.

A life-long resident of the Flathead Indian Reservation of Western Montana, and long-term editor at the Salish Kootenai College Press, also on the Flathead Indian Reservation, historian Robert Bigart is supremely qualified to write a book about the history of the Salish people. *Getting Good Crops* focuses on the Bitterroot Salish, a group who resisted moving to the Flathead Indian Reservation after the Treaty of 1855 because, according to their interpretation of the treaty, the US government allowed them to retain their homelands in Western Montana’s Bitterroot River Valley as their permanent residence. Government interpreted the treaty differently (as did the white immigrants who then moved into the Salish territory), arguing that all Salish, or the Flathead as they were mistakenly called, should join the Kootenai and the Pend d’Oreille at the Flathead Indian Reservation. Bigart focuses his book on the last two decades when the Bitterroot Salish were still in their beloved homelands, trying to carve an existence amid government removal efforts and often-hostile immigrant whites.

Bigart argues that the Salish people’s determined diplomatic dealings with the government and immigrant local whites, as well as their economic survival strategies, helped them to maintain a peaceful coexistence with whites that against all odds allowed them to maintain residence in their homelands. It

was only when they had exhausted all efforts and when economic circumstances made it imperative to capitulate that the Salish agreed to remove to the Flathead Indian Reservation sixty miles north. Bigart credits able Salish leadership, especially Chief Charlo, for these efforts, but notes that he did not make decisions alone: Charlo always received confirmation from his people. Therefore, Bigart emphasizes, the Salish were active agents in their history rather than victims of government or local policies they supposedly could not influence.

Traditional historical views on American Indians of almost any period focus on either their “savagery” or their victimhood, and Bigart points out that this is the case with all previous histories written on the Bitterroot Salish. Both the source base and authors’ lack of understanding in regard to Salish culture and polity create these problematic narratives. Whites have written all sources, whether they were Indian agents, other government officials, local newspaper editors, or other observers, few of whom understood the people they were writing about. Historians have used this written record as a matter of fact, not trying to dig for the Salish voices behind the record. Bigart, although limited to the same records, does an admirable job in deciphering Salish intentions behind their actions, even if their direct voice is missing from the record. Though this leads to some speculation, Bigart convinces readers that his interpretation is valid. This is American Indian history at its best.

Bigart begins in chapter 1 with pre-1870 Salish survival strategies, arguing that these “strategic seeds” set the stage for Salish leadership’s diplomatic and economic survival in the challenging decades ahead. Chapter 2 focuses on one of the Bitterroot Salish people’s key economic subsistence methods, hunting buffalo on the Central Montana plains. These annual hunting trips led them directly to confrontations with the Plains Indian peoples. Although the Salish gained horses before most Plains peoples, they had only indirect access to guns and ammunition, which forced them to seek allies among the early whites in the region, and a spiritual weapon in conversion to Christianity. Bigart makes use of Catholic mission records to note that violent deaths were a common occurrence among Salish males, so much so that Salish women commonly married non-Salish men, Indian and white alike.

In chapter 3, Bigart discusses the Salish efforts to create a military alliance with whites during their buffalo hunts. Although this was not easy, persistent diplomatic efforts created a “prickly” alliance between the two because it benefited both sides. Early Montana whites simply needed Indian allies to survive, and Bigart reveals the elaborate diplomacy used between the Salish and whites to achieve this alliance despite mutual suspicion and mistrust. In chapter 4, Bigart covers the biggest military crisis of Western Montana, the Nez Perce war and Missoula County’s preceding efforts to secure a US Army post. Local

Missoula newspapers advocated bringing in an army post, mostly due to its economic benefits to the region, as Bigart points out. Newspapers were not beyond inventing conflict with the Salish if that would achieve the goal of gaining a US military presence in the area. Bigart credits careful diplomacy by Salish leaders and many of their white neighbors for keeping the peace between the two, noting how rare it was for any violent incidents to occur. Tensions eased once the Bitterroot whites gained titles to their homesteads, as did the Salish. Chief Charlo made sure that the Salish traditional allies, the Nez Perce, did not harm any Bitterroot whites during their campaign in 1877, so effectively that even most anti-Salish local whites had to admit that the Salish might have prevented a tense situation from turning into a local war.

Chapter 5 outlines diplomacy between the Bitterroot Salish and US government in regard to government efforts to move the Salish to the reservation. Relations with the government were of secondary importance to Salish interests compared to day-to-day dealings with local whites. The government was less than honest in its dealings (there was some question as to whether Charlo's signature was forged to a document dealing with acceptance to removal in 1872), while the Salish bought themselves more time by working to muddy the diplomatic situation enough so that the government was satisfied that the Salish seemed not to oppose the removal while at the same time they did not agree to it.

Chapters 6 and 7 detail Salish diplomacy in regard to the increasing number of whites in the Bitterroot Valley. The focus of chapter 6 is Salish-white cooperative efforts, such as commerce and trade, in contrast to the conflicts of chapter 7. Leaders of both communities tried to keep "the lid on" friction and succeeded to an amazing extent, as violent conflicts and crime between the Salish and the whites were infrequent.

The final two chapters analyze the changing economic circumstances for the Bitterroot Salish and their consequent acceptance of removal to the reservation in 1891. The key economic strategy for the Salish had been annual buffalo hunts, but after 1883 the buffalo had been hunted to near extinction. To maintain economic independence the remaining available economic strategy was farming, and Bigart focuses on Salish efforts to expand their farms. However, their land base was limited, and so were their economic means: whites fenced their farms, which limited the traditional free range for Salish horses and cattle, and the government was unwilling to support economic development for non-reservation Indians. Bigart speculates on whether the Salish could have survived without the catastrophic drought of 1889, which destroyed their crops, but finds himself unable to conclude from the record whether they could have maintained their independence as farmers. In any case, that year Charlo and his people concluded that the only remaining strategy of survival

was to agree to government removal to the Flathead Indian Reservation. As usual, Congress delayed funding the removal for another two years, which meant the Salish fell into deeper poverty and dependency. After the removal, the government failed to deliver on many of the promises made to the removed Bitterroot Salish.

Bigart concludes that the diplomacy and economic survival strategies used during the late nineteenth century have been similar to the ones utilized during the twentieth century, and they have continued to serve the Salish well. This reviewer agrees. The University of Oklahoma Press has included this volume in its *The Civilization of the American Indian Series*, and deservedly so. There are two wishes, however. First, Bigart has not had access to the extensive oral history collections of the Salish and Pend d'Oreille Culture Committee, as the committee is working on its own tribal histories. It is time to publish this oral record and get the full story out. Second, we still need a solid text on the Salish during the twentieth century. The only critique regarding this volume is that, because the author has chosen a topical, rather than chronological approach, certain redundancy results. Still, the organization works, even if some unnecessary minor detail is included.

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Indigenous Screen Cultures in Canada. Edited by Sigurjón Baldur Hafsteinsson and Marian Bredin. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2010. 202 pages. \$55.00 cloth; \$27.95 paper.

Scholars and filmgoers alike know that Canada has long been a pioneer in its support of indigenous media. The National Film Board trained First Nations filmmakers during the 1960s and continues to provide funding for filmmakers from a variety of backgrounds. With this in mind, the title of the collection seemingly promised a broad and far-reaching examination of this rich history. However, the articles in this book have a narrower focus that reflect the book's origins in a panel on the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) presented at the 2006 Society for Cinema and Media Studies Conference in Vancouver, British Columbia. It includes articles by Native and non-Native authors of various nationalities whose work is informed by diverse experiences in media production, academic scholarship, and policy consulting. Offering a varied perspective on APTN, the collection brings much-needed insight into the operation of this important and pioneering media outlet.