

Victoria Freeman. *Where Histories Meet: Indigenous and Settler Encounters in the Toronto Area*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2025. 368 pages. ISBN 978-1-77385-643-8. \$45.99 pbk.

Where Histories Meet: Indigenous and Settler Encounters in the Toronto Area provides a clear and accessible historical account of the Toronto region from 1787 to 1876. The origins of the book lie in an initial research project *Changing the Narrative: Reconnecting Indigenous and Settler Histories at Black Creek Pioneer Village* (now known as The Village at Black Creek 2024), for the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), for which the author was the principle researcher. This multiyear research project was started in 2017 and is ongoing. The TRCA continues to develop a narrative that is more reflective of the robust history of the site. This historic site, purposefully created in the 1960s, shared a sanitized version of the history of the settlers and their successes. The original Village at Black Creek educational offerings shared neither the early encounters between First Nations peoples and settlers nor the environmental impact of settlers, which had huge repercussions on First Nations' ability to be self-sufficient. The author requested permission to adapt her research into a book to ensure information was publicly available. Permission was granted by the TRCA and the research committee of First Nations representatives. This committee comprises members from the five First Nations closest to Toronto: the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Mississaugas of Scugog Island, the Chippewa of Rama, the Chippewas of Georgina Island and Six Nations of the Grand River.

The introductory chapter of the book outlines Freeman's research methods. She worked consultatively with the research committee of First Nations members. They reviewed, provided feedback on and approved the original research directions, questions and methodology and also archival and secondary-source research. This committee also encouraged the author to not only focus on "colonialism's impact on First Nations, but also their strategies for creative adaptation, resilience and resistance" (p. 4).

Freeman builds in a First Nations point of view by including content of interviews with 20 First Nations Knowledge Keepers and Elders. The interviewees invited into the process were suggested by the participating First Nations, some were descendants of historical figures important in the book. Interviewee information and quotes are integrated into the book, both for emphasis and perspective, thereby providing the reader with Indigenous voices, interpretations and histories on "colonialism's consequences and meaning in the present and for the future" (p. 4).

After the initial introductory chapter, the book comprises six parts. These parts chronicle various themes in the history of the region. Part One: The Toronto Carrying Place, starts with a discussion of the origin of the name Toronto, a discussion of the earliest First Nations in the region approximately 13,000 years ago, and their use of the Humber River watershed as a well-

established trade route. The author then outlines initial contact with settlers and the start of Colonial rivalries. Part Two: Founding York, is about the early treaties and the slow deterioration of the relationship between First Nations and settlers. It further elaborates on the initial displacement of Indigenous peoples and their strategies to try to resist these changes. At this point in history the First Nations were treated more respectfully and still regarded as the stewards of their land, although there were continual attempts to impose British rules and governance. Part Three: Changing Relationships, covers the period from the War of 1812 until 1820s when there was a huge influx of the settlers. Settlement practices caused deforestation and other types of environmental destruction that made it impossible for the First Nations to hunt and fish and provide themselves with a sustainable livelihood. After the War of 1812, the British no longer believed they needed First Nations as allies and increasingly took over Indigenous land and sold it to settlers.

Part Four: The Civilizational Agenda, outlines how Christianity was introduced to Indigenous peoples, some of the initial pressures by the Methodists to convert Indigenous people, without understanding that First Nations already had an existing belief system and sets of laws. Freeman overviews the early model villages where, after being dispossessed of the majority of their land, First Nations were to live. Further it discusses attempts to settle First Nations people at Coldwater and the Narrows Settlement. Unfortunately, unscrupulous government employees and encroachment by settlers, resulted in a forced surrender of the land and displacement to another location.

Part Five: Agency in Times of Struggle, discusses the First Nations attempts to secure land tenure, the journey of surviving, rebuilding and adapting, and resisting change. First Nations were well aware of the corruption that reigned in government at this time. These chapters also highlight the challenges that women faced in trying to gain or regain title to their lands. In 2012, a \$307 million Coldwater-Narrows Land Claim Settlement was accepted by First Nations for this improper surrender.

Part Six: New Strategies for Dark Times, focuses on the Indian Act and the further erosion of Indigenous rights and lands. It discusses the many attempts by First Nations to amend or cancel the Indian Act, including removing all parts except the one that banned alcohol. Significant individuals, both settler and Indigenous, who were involved in decision making are identified and their family relationships displayed in charts. The reader is made aware of their complex relationships and the impacts of their decisions on the region's development. In Part Six, the continuing legacy of two First Nations men, Dr. Oronhyatekha and Dr. Peter Edmond Jones, is discussed at length.

The overall organization of the parts and chapters is logical and easy for the reader to follow. Some maps illustrate the geography of the Indigenous traditional lands along with the displacement and travel routes. Other maps delineate the movement of settlers and how land was divided up for these newcomers. The author also includes photos of some of the key people

involved in this period of history, both Indigenous and settler, along with other illustrations that support the content, such as artwork, family histories, and excerpts from colonial Treaties. The author includes 30 pages of meticulous notes which a reader can peruse to explore further if their interests are piqued. Although at times difficult to read, especially the accounts of the corrupt government agents and how their actions attempted to displace and destroy First Nations, there is hope, as Freeman shares an equal number of examples of the ingenuity of Indigenous peoples to counteract displacement and other injustices.

In her Conclusion, Freeman weaves together quotations from many of her Indigenous interviewees to ensure that the Elders and Knowledge Keepers have the final word in the book. Their voices are optimistic, with Elders and Knowledge Keepers highlighting the tenacity and enduring qualities of their people, their ability to understand and negotiate in a new system. Each of the First Nations kept parts of their histories, cultures, traditions and languages alive despite attempts by the government to quash them. They continue to move forward to develop narratives that are more robust.

This tome is an essential read to gain insight into the history of the Toronto region. It provides a method to thoughtfully update narratives, highlights the importance of having a variety of participants, both from First Nations and other communities, and the necessity of working together. It is written in a clear and straightforward manner, so that a general audience can grasp the concepts and understanding of the book, but also the details enable even those who are already knowledgeable about the history of the Toronto area, to increase their understanding of the original interactions and encounters of between First Nations and settlers. General readers, students, and academics from many disciplines alike will gain insight by reading this book.

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