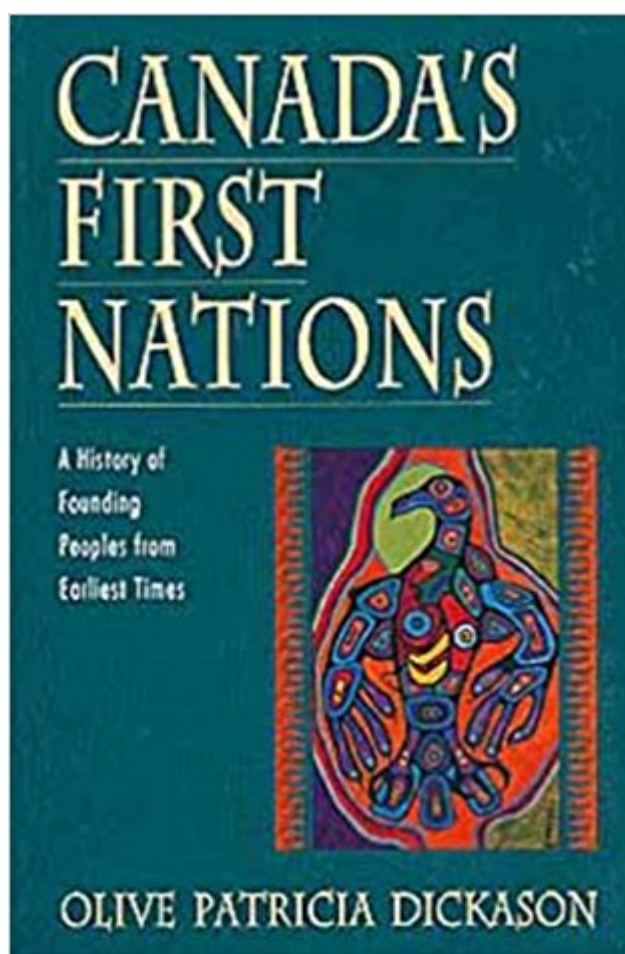


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Canada's First Nations: A History Of Founding Peoples From Earliest Times (Civilization Of The American Indian)



Synopsis

This is a comprehensive history of Canada's original inhabitants-- Indians, Inuit, and later, Metis. Using an interdisciplinary approach that combines history, anthropology, and archaeology, Dickason tells the story of the more than 50 nations in the territory that is now Canada, beginning with the arrival of people in North America from across the Bering Strait many thousands of years ago. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Olive Dickason is Professor Emeritus in the Department of History at the University of Alberta. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Canada's First Nations is a solid piece of scholarship detailed enough to satisfy advanced historians and well written in order to please a greater audience. Make no mistake, this is a vast topic covering 15,000 years in history and pre-history that had to be shrunk to 560 pages only. Of course there are a few omissions, of course there needed to be some sort of selection of incidents and sources. Most of the author's choice regarding her focus can be understood easily and makes the book a good read. The only grave criticism of which the author cannot be spared is that at some places Dickason does not sufficiently question her ancient written sources, but rather takes for granted what has been said about amerindian behavioural patterns in the 16th and 17th century. While this can be attributed to the vast undertaking itself, it nonetheless may be one wrong approach to sources

leading to a perhaps distorted picture of amerindian ancient culture. One example: "All Iroquoians practised torture and cannibalism" ... [56]. While the first can be regarded as proven, sources related to the alleged latter behaviour are definitely not to be taken at face value, as Heidi Peter-Räfflcher (Kannibalismus in der Prähistorischen Forschung, Studien zu einer paradigmatischen Deutung und ihren Grundlagen.) in her doctoral thesis of 1994 (University FU Berlin) quite convincingly points out. In fact, as Peter-Räfflcher succeeded to show, remarks related to cannibalism have to be taken with utmost care. Peter-Räfflcher goes as far as questioning the existence of such a practise in history at all and relates that there is not one single case in history when such a practise has been positively witnessed, that is neurotic missionaries - themselves living under a constant threat of getting slain - made up these stories of "Gog and Magog" in order to illustrate their braveness among the barbarians, to put it short. Despite these flaws Canada's First Nations is a solid piece of work well worth the time it takes to read it.

This is an excellent book, which can be used as an encyclopedia for the history, traditional names, and geographical location of the Canadian Native peoples. The author has used numerous primary sources and maps and her style is very readable. Dickason gave also the aboriginal perspective of many events but in a very balanced account. The book can grasp the attention not only to professional historians dealing with Native history but also to all readers who have some general interest in the past of Canada's Amerindians.

This book is a wonderful synthesis of Canadian aboriginal history. I was impressed by the author's detailed and well-balanced approach. It is neither a moral fable nor a panegyric of conquerors' exploits, but rather history as it should be told. The only downside is the book's episodic style but that is necessitated by its ambitious goal. Olive Dickason did an especially good job highlighting the different histories of Canada's natives both pre- and post-contact.

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