

foundland to the Yukon, the boreal forest reaches into Alaska, through the vastness of Russia and into the Nordic countries of Scandinavia. Forests of coniferous black spruce, white spruce, balsam fir, jack pine, and tamarack, interspersed with deciduous white birch, aspens, willows and alders dominate the boreal scene.

Canada's boreal forests are of national, and indeed, global significance. Approximately 40% of the globe's boreal forests lie within Canada's boundaries. Fifty-eight percent of Canada's landmass is boreal forest that includes over 90% of the country's remaining large, intact forest landscapes or 25% of the globe's intact forests. Ecological values include prime habitat for many species of wildlife (including 75 percent of the continent's waterfowl), vast areas of lakes, rivers and wetlands and globally significant storage of carbon.

Canadian forests, especially the boreal forest, have long played a key role in the national economy. In 2003 alone, forest products contributed almost \$30 billion to Canada's \$46 billion trade balance. Canada is the world's second largest producer of wood pulp and the world's largest producer of newsprint. Direct forest industry employment totaled 376 300 workers for 2003. Much of this economic activity is directly related to the boreal forest that acts as the economic foundation for many communities across the country.

Given the economic and ecological significance of Canada's boreal forest, it is small wonder that people are becoming increasingly concerned about the long-term sustainability of this continental biome. *Rendezvous with the Wild* is the latest in a series of books, articles and media features on the future of the boreal forest. It tells the story of the Boreal Rendezvous, a series of canoe trips taken in the summer of 2003 on ten Canadian boreal rivers from the Wind River in the Yukon to the Moisie in Quebec.

The canoe trips were a vision of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) in collaboration with the David Suzuki Foundation, the Canadian Boreal Initiative, and Mountain Equipment Co-op. They sought ways that would help shift our relationship with the boreal forest from one of accelerating large-scale, industrial fragmentation and transformation, to one that focused more on boreal forest conservation and viable, sustainable development.

Edited by the well-known Canadian author and avid canoeist James Raffan, *Rendezvous with the Wild* is an enticing collage of photography, art, journal entries, essays, poems, musings and prayers from many of the canoe trip participants. The variety of entries is marked by the diversity of contributors. Over 70 peo-

ple including Native elders, conservationists, television celebrities, scientists, photographers, poets, academics, canoe builders, and musicians contributed their voice and creativity to this marvelous tribute to the mystery and attraction of the boreal forest.

As Raffan notes in his opening essay, this is not a book about the boreal forest, but rather a book in response to the boreal forest. The canoe trips and canoeing act as constant themes weaving their way through the rich and varied fare. The photography is splendid and the book's layout a delight to the senses. The reader is carried along the current of the river with boreal vistas provided by the many witnesses offered by the book. Of particular strength throughout the book is the vision and witness of the First Nations to their boreal forest home.

The French philosopher Blais Pascal once remarked that the human heart has reasons of which the mind knows little. In boreal forest conservation issues, the environmental community often takes refuge in the technical, scientific dimensions of any particular boreal forest issue. This is essential and necessary. However, sole attention to the technical dimension fails to tap the depths of energy that can be attributed to the multidimensional human experience of the boreal forest. This human "emotional" experience is often dismissed as simply a "subjective," private experience that cannot be accepted on par with so-called "objective" scientific knowledge of any particular issue. *Rendezvous with the Wild* dispels such dualistic thinking and attempt to legitimize the direct human experience of the boreal forest as a powerful force that may energize action on behalf of forest conservation.

Rendezvous with the Wild begins and ends with a prayer by William Commanda, an Algonquin elder from Maniwaki and honorary elder of the CPAWS Boreal Program. The book is thus bounded by the spiritual, by due attention to the human experience of the boreal forest. You will have to look elsewhere for material on the boreal forest, on its ecology, on the impact of industrial activity, or the development of boreal forest policy. *Rendezvous with the Wild* attends to other data, to the inner data of human consciousness vis-à-vis the boreal forest. I have no doubt that if such data is not seriously considered, then conservation and sustainable development of Canada's boreal forests will remain a dream – forever.

JOHN MCCARTHY

Holy Rosary Parish, 175 Emma Street, Guelph, Ontario
N1E 1V6; jmccarthy@jesuits.ca

ENVIRONMENT

The Earth's Blanket: Traditional Teachings for Sustainable Living

By Nancy J. Turner. 2005. University of Washington Press, P.O. Box 50096, Seattle, Washington 98145-5096 USA. 298 pages, U.S. \$29.95.

Nancy Turner's book, *The Earth's Blanket* is a thorough treatise on indigenous peoples' relationships with the environment, and has as its goal to demon-

strate and better understand alternative ways of viewing the world. Underlying the theme is the concern that the rich environmental knowledge that sustains the earth's ecosystems is being lost at a time of great environmental devastation. It is well researched, well supported with references and source notes, and cites numerous examples to substantiate all claims.

The central thesis revolves around the concept of the earth's blanket, which is a metaphor used by the Nlaka'pmx of the southern interior of BC, to describe the plants that cover the earth; if removed will cause the earth to be "angry" and to "weep". Turner weaves the theme of the reciprocal relationship that humans have with their environments throughout the eight chapters. The reader moves through discussions of wealth and value in a changing world, a kincentric approach to nature, honouring nature through ceremony and ritual, to land stewardship, all richly illustrated with stories of First peoples and historical accounts (from the 1800s onwards from the journals of Simon Fraser) of Indian agents, anthropologists and early European travelers.

An ethnobotanist for over 30 years and as a non-indigenous academic, Turner skillfully combines the perspectives of indigenous peoples: chiefs, friends, Elders, ethnobotanists, in several communities in British Columbia, with some examples from indigenous communities in other parts of the world (i.e. Sierra Terrahumara, in Mexico). Turner has fluency with First Nations peoples and issues in British Columbia and through developing trust and friendship, has become close to special and profound relationships with earths' offerings. Turner provides several traditional stories, ceremonies and rituals that are "situated", connected to the history and geography of the region and thus connects people to place. Stories also demonstrate how knowledge and understanding of the environment is relational – that the plants, animals and other features are imbued with human qualities, so that humans are not viewed as separate and outside ecosystems.

Several important issues emerge throughout the book that tie together the loss of cultures and environmental destruction: the importance of language is mentioned several times, in that language is a reservoir of traditional knowledge, culture and connections to the landscape. Loss of language severs that connection. The consequences of environmental destruction are poignantly described using several species, with salmon a recurring example throughout the book. Salmon is a strong marker of cultural identity for British Columbia First Nations and is a thread throughout the book that weaves together origin stories with scientific understandings of salmon ecology. Turner provides details on how to prepare salmon and chronicles the demise of salmon stock and the effect this has on communities that depend on the catch. One Sec-

wepemc story about salmon migration helps children learn that salmon are to be respected and admired. Other key species that are indicators of ecological decline are the Bitterroot (*Lewisia rediviva*) used by the Nlaka'pmx peoples, numerous edible berries and abalone.

In Chapter 7, "Everything is One", Turner ties together the several different themes that focus on human's interdependence with the environment. The interconnections that are so vital are expressed in the story of the Xaxl'ep people who live at Fountain, a small settlement near the Fraser River, where "Everything in their territory is connected to them and if part of it is lost the Xaxl'ep lose part of themselves." This makes the point that when habitat and resources are taken away, people lose the knowledge associated with that place and that resource.

Towards the end of the book, Turner introduces scientific concepts such resilience, complex systems, adaptive management and ecosystem based management to bring together the multi-faceted human-ecosystem relationship and how we can live sustainably. There are stories of hope and ideas for a sustainable future. For example, the Stó:lō people of the Fraser valley are revitalizing their language and cultural heritage after the drainage of the Sumas Lake in the 1920s and the subsequent loss of traditional resources, and means of transportation for the Stó:lō people. The Tmix[®] research project of the Nlaka'pmx people encourages developers to integrate traditional knowledge with land management to foster a sustainable land ethic. Turner suggests three criteria for positive change and eight concepts for ecocultural restoration and urges us to continue to be optimistic despite the level of environmental destruction that we are witnessing globally.

If there are any shortcomings to this book, they are few. At times, it is difficult to delineate the chapters as several of them overlap and appear repetitive. While Turner is meticulous in providing both scientific and indigenous/local language names for all species mentioned, the scientific name is sometimes provided more than once, when once would have been sufficient. Also, Turner does not address changes in attitudes towards the environment by First Nations – there are often difficult trade offs to be made when economic benefits seem to outweigh traditional teachings of respect and environmental conservation. Attitude change occurs within communities as values shift – addressing what is to be done about the loss of sense of responsibility for stewardship is a difficult issue. In all, however, the book provides important lessons on First Nations stewardship and promises of positive change if we all just listen.

ELLEN WOODLEY

RR4, Fergus, Ontario N1M 2W5 Canada